

Early Modern Communi(cati)ons:  
Studies in Early Modern English Literature  
and Culture

Edited by

Kinga Földvály and Erzsébet Stróbl

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P U B L I S H I N G

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This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-4186-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4186-3

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations .....	ix
List of Tables .....	x
Introduction	
KINGA FÖLDVÁRY and ERZSÉBET STRÓBL .....	1
<b>Part I: Social and Religious Issues in Early Modern Texts</b>	
The Queen and Death: An Elizabethan Book of Devotion ERZSÉBET STRÓBL .....	10
On the Shoulders of Giants: Texts and Contexts behind William Harrison's <i>Description of England</i> KINGA FÖLDVÁRY .....	32
Women of No Importance in Edmund Spenser's <i>The Faerie Queene</i> ÁGNES STRICKLAND-PAJTÓK .....	53
"One Turne in the Inner Court": The Art of Memory in the Sermons of John Donne NOÉMI MÁRIA NAJBAUER .....	73
Ten Days in Paradise: The Chronology of Terrestrial Action in Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> GÁBOR ITZÉS .....	100
<b>Part II: Shakespeare on Page and Stage</b>	
Hymen's Truth: "At-one-ment" from Shakespeare to Tyndale, from Tyndale to Shakespeare TIBOR FABINY .....	132

William Kemp and Falstaff: Reality and Role in Elizabethan Popular Culture KRISZTINA N. STREITMAN .....	152
Forgotten and Remembered: the Shakespearean Hobby-Horse and Circulations of Cultural Memory NATÁLIA PIKLI.....	177
This Great Ship of Fools: <i>The Ship of Fools</i> and Elizabethan/Jacobean Drama ZITA TURI .....	202
“Walking Anatomies:” Violence and Dissection on the Early Modern English Stage ATTILA KISS .....	222
“In what vile part of this anatomy doth my name lodge?” Parts of Names and Names of Parts in Shakespeare’s <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> GÉZA KÁLLAY .....	243
“O Yet Defend Me, Friends!” Claudius’s Struggle for the Favour of His Audience BALÁZS SZIGETI.....	261
“So Berattle the Common Stages”: Metatheatricality and Polyfunctionality in two Hungarian Shakespeare Productions VERONIKA SCHANDL .....	283
Appendices .....	303
Bibliography .....	311
Contributors.....	336
Index.....	339

TEN DAYS IN PARADISE:  
THE CHRONOLOGY OF TERRESTRIAL ACTION  
IN MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST*\*

GÁBOR ITTZÉS

In what is arguably the most important eighteenth-century edition of *Paradise Lost*, Thomas Newton comments on the new morning at the beginning of the epic's penultimate book (11.135) "that according to the best calculation we can make, this is the eleventh day of the poem, we mean of that part of it which is transacted within the sphere of day." With that proposal he was engaging in interpretive debate with a distinguished predecessor as the continuation of the text makes clear: "Mr. Addison reckons only *ten* days to the action of the poem, that is he supposes that our first parents were expell'd out of Paradise the very next day after the fall."<sup>1</sup> In the last essay of his influential critical series on *Paradise Lost*, Joseph Addison had indeed declared that "from *Adam's* first Appearance in the Fourth Book, to his Expulsion from *Paradise* in the Twelfth, the Author reckons ten days," to which he then added, "As for that part of the Action which is described in the three first Books, as it does not pass within the Regions of Nature, [ . . . ] it is not subject to any calculations of Time."<sup>2</sup> The last sentence glances back at the first substantial essay in the series,<sup>3</sup> where he argued that "as a great Part of *Milton's* Story was

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\* Research for this paper was supported by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund, OTKA (Grant No. 101928).

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Newton, ed., *Paradise Lost: Poem in Twelve Books. The Author John Milton. A New Edition with Notes of Various Authors*, 2 vols. (London, 1749), 2:315n.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Addison, "Criticism on Milton's *Paradise Lost*: From *The Spectator*, 31 December, 1711 – 3 May, 1712," in *English Reprints*, 8 vols., ed. Edward Arber (1869–71; reprint, New York: AMS, 1966), 2:151 (No. 369, 3 May 1712).

<sup>3</sup> The series, beginning with No. 267 (5 Jan 1712), was commonly reprinted with the text of the epic in earlier editions, but Edward Arber, from whose edition I quote, prefaces the analysis with No. 262 (31 Dec 1711), in which Addison

transacted in Regions that lie out of the Reach of the Sun and the Sphere of Day, it is impossible to gratifie the Reader with [. . .] a Calculation” of “the Space of Time, which is taken up by the Action.”<sup>4</sup> That is the point whose faint echo was audible in Newton’s caveat even before he named Addison. In fact, Newton’s proviso primarily harks back to a much earlier point in his own text, a comment on 4.598, where he had already been adopting his predecessor’s argument: “for the action of the preceding books [1–3] lying out of the sphere of the sun, the time could not be computed.”<sup>5</sup>

It is not simply this parallel paradoxicality of the authors’ sceptical declarations and enterprising performance that makes this early controversy so fascinating. It would also deserve closer scrutiny for articulating the problem of the very possibility of a global chronology of Milton’s epic, a concern recently raised again in a forceful manner by Anthony Welch.<sup>6</sup> Leaving aside those thorny issues, however, I want to tread on safer ground in this paper and concentrate on the primary bone of contention between Addison and Newton. Whatever their shared reservations about an overall chronology of epic action in *Paradise Lost*, they both agree that such a reconstructive exercise is legitimate when applied to the portion of terrestrial action—and yet they cannot agree on what the result should be. In the following analysis I will not only attempt to adjudicate between them but, drawing on a broader corpus of critical literature, identify and examine other debated points in the terrestrial segment of the primary narrative, and offer a detailed reconstruction of the poem’s chronology from Satan’s arrival in the cosmos<sup>7</sup> to Adam and Eve’s expulsion. That is a perhaps modest but crucial step towards solving the larger and more convoluted issue of the poem’s overall time scheme and establishing its chronology, including the secondary narrative level.

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announces his intention to “enter into a regular Criticism upon his [Milton’s] *Paradise lost[sic]*” (Addison, “Criticism,” 2:14).

<sup>4</sup> Addison, “Criticism,” 2:20 (No. 267, 5 Jan 1712).

<sup>5</sup> Newton, *Paradise Lost*, 1:275n.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Welch, “Reconsidering Chronology in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Studies* 41 (2002): 1–17; cf. p. 120, below.

<sup>7</sup> I use this term to describe the world created in six days (cf. Genesis 1–2 and book 7 of *PL*), i.e., the fourth cosmological region, in addition to heaven, hell, and chaos, in Milton’s universe. Further on this usage, see my essay, “The Structure of Milton’s Universe: The Shape and Unity of the World in *Paradise Lost*,” in *Milton Through the Centuries*, ed. Gábor Ittész and Miklós Péti (Budapest: KRE & L’Harmattan, 2012) 34.

## 1. The first day of terrestrial action

Strictly speaking, terrestrial action begins after the quasi-invocation that opens book 4, with Satan on Mount Niphates, where he alighted in the last line of the previous book (3.742). He had entered “the Regions of Nature” some two hundred lines earlier, however, when he crossed the protective shell of the cosmos at the orifice and flew down through the stars (3.561–63). That descent is surely not “transacted in Regions that lie out of the Reach of the Sun and the Sphere of Day.” Quite appropriately, the first firmly datable, and explicitly dated, event in epic action is Satan’s encounter with Uriel at the sun (3.613–739). Proof positive of its temporal setting “at height of noon”<sup>8</sup> is provided only retrospectively in Uriel’s warning to the guardian angels (4.564),<sup>9</sup> but that piece of information comes as no surprise since we have been prepared for it by a simile in the original context. When Satan explores the sun, he finds “all sunshine, as when his [the sun’s] beams at noon / Culminate from the equator, as they now / Shot upward still direct” (3.616–18). The rebel angel is walking on the sun (he landed at 3.588) so it is beneath him, sending its beams *upward*, but they are as direct and perpendicular as they are at noon on the earth’s equator. From here on, Milton takes great care to keep track of time and signal its passage. In the following explorations I will take “terrestrial action” to refer to events on the primary narrative level from Satan’s encounter with “the regent of the sun” (3.690) to the end of the epic.

Satan’s descent from the sun to Mount Niphates is virtually instantaneous. When he had landed and began a long soliloquy (4.32–113), “the full-blazing sun, / [Still] sat high in his meridian tower” (4.29–30). That is to say, both events—the “stripling cherub” (3.636) episode and the private speech—are dated to noon.<sup>10</sup> Unbeknownst to Satan, Uriel observes the latter and notices the changing colour of his visage betraying his disguise (4.114–30). That generates an important subplot that we will pick up again at sunset. First, however, the narrative follows Satan, who approaches Eden and explores the land, then enters Paradise and surveys

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<sup>8</sup> Verbatim quotations from *Paradise Lost* are taken from Fowler’s edition: Alastair Fowler, ed., *John Milton, Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. (Harlow etc.: Longman, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. also “some evil spirit [. . .] passed at noon by his [Uriel’s] sphere” (Argument 4).

<sup>10</sup> On the epic’s noon symbolism, see Albert R. Cirillo’s now classic study, “Noon-Midnight and the Temporal Structure of *Paradise Lost*,” in *Milton’s Epic Poetry*, ed. C. A. Patrides (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 215–32.

the garden from the tree of life, where he "Sat like a cormorant" (4.196). At day's end<sup>11</sup> he finds Adam and Eve. After another soliloquy Satan, now disguised in various animal shapes, eavesdrops on their conversation and then goes roaming through the garden (4.288–538).<sup>12</sup>

With a characteristic "Meanwhile" (4.539) we return to the subplot. To warn the angelic guard in charge of paradisaic security, "came Uriel, gliding through the even / On a sunbeam" (4.555–56). The exchange is just long enough to allow the sun to sink under the horizon so that Uriel can return to his post on the very same beam, now sliding in the opposite direction (4.589–97). The image is as witty as it is accurate, and it can brilliantly serve as an emblem of the creativity and precision characteristic of Milton's temporal references. William Empson was the first to register the play on *even*: Uriel crosses the evening on a nearly level ray of the parting sun. "[T]he pun gives both Uriel and the sunset a vast and impermanent equilibrium; it is because of the inevitable Fall of our night that he falls to earth."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, almost everything about this first edenic night that we witness centres on balance:

the sun  
Declined was hastening now with prone career  
To the Ocean Isles, and in the ascending scale  
Of heaven the stars that usher evening rose. (4.352–55)

The image of the scales here not only aptly describes the equilibrium between the sun's descent in the west and the stars' ascent in the east but also invokes the constellation Libra that is just rising above the horizon opposite the sun<sup>14</sup> (Figure 1). In that sense the poised scale is indeed "ascending." J. B. Broadbent observes that this "verse enacts the balance of paradise,"<sup>15</sup> and indeed, the balance of Paradise is constantly *enacted*. The condition of the unfallen world is not stasis but dynamic equilibrium.<sup>16</sup> The harmony of the natural world is symbolic of Adam's

<sup>11</sup> For evening references, see esp. 4.327–31 and 352–55.

<sup>12</sup> The episode includes Eve's second-order narrative of her own beginning, that is, her creation story (4.449–91).

<sup>13</sup> William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Hogarth, 1986), 158.

<sup>14</sup> Keeping with an old tradition, at *PL* 10.329 Milton states that the sun was in Aries when the cosmos was created.

<sup>15</sup> John B. Broadbent, *Some Graver Subject: An Essay on Paradise Lost* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), 199.

<sup>16</sup> On paradisaic landscape as expressive of the prelapsarian world's dynamism, see Mary F. Norton, "The Rising World of Waters Dark and Deep": Chaos Theory and *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 32 (1995): 100; cf. also Gábor Itzész, "Till by

standing in obedience: even while he is constant, his moral world is no less dynamic than its objective correlative. But Milton is not yet done with the description of the latter.

Meanwhile in utmost longitude, where heaven  
 With earth and ocean meets, the setting sun  
 Slowly descended, and with right aspect  
 Against the eastern gate of Paradise  
 Levelled his evening rays. (4.539–43)

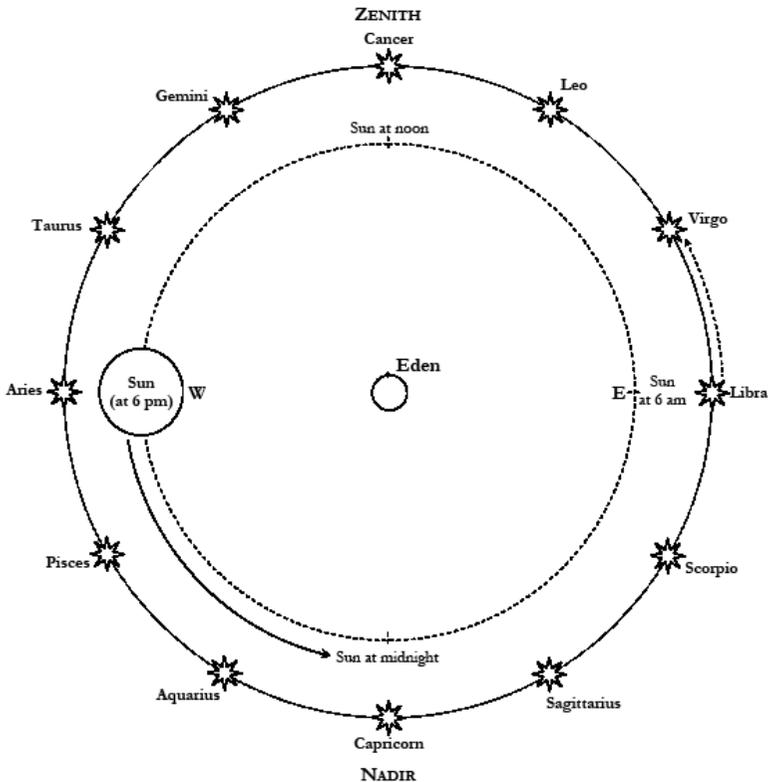


Figure 1. Paradisal equilibrium at sunset

Images of equilibrium are delicately reinforced. Opposites meet at this moment ("heaven / With earth and ocean"), and if the "evening rays" are not enough to recall the earlier wordplay on the "even sunbeam," the verb introduces the punning metaphor of balance: the rays are "levelled," that is, "aim[ed], direct[ed], point[ed]" and "[l]ying in a plane coinciding with or parallel to the plane of the horizon."<sup>17</sup>

Even more important is the modulation of time that these lines effect. We are now nearly two hundred lines after the previous passage when the sun "was hastening" down (4.353). Instead of having long since disappeared below the horizon, it is still hovering there in decidedly slower motion (4.541). It will not finally give way to twilight for nearly sixty more lines: "still evening" comes on only at 4.598. It is not the number of lines that counts here; it is merely a convenient way of registering the reading experience. Several episodes, we recall, take place between the descriptive passages.<sup>18</sup> It is a decidedly leisurely evening, and with the flashbacks—Satan's, Adam's, Eve's, Uriel's—even more time gets packed into the episode, where time virtually stands still or, more accurately, slows to an almost imperceptible pace. The scene is altogether characteristic of Milton's dual time-scheme in *Paradise Lost* whereby we simultaneously experience an interval as both short and long.<sup>19</sup>

Given the equinoctial days of Paradise,<sup>20</sup> it is easy to assign a precise hour to the sunset scene: it must be six o'clock. The balance it embodies therefore has a larger significance. Not only are the sunbeams horizontal, but the sun itself is half-way between its highest and deepest points, midday and midnight, perfectly balancing light and darkness. The scales are absolutely even, symbolic of Adam's position, "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (3.99). The allusion may be rather understated,

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<sup>17</sup> The definitions are quoted from the appropriate entries under "level" in *OED* (v.<sup>1</sup> II.7.d, and *adj.* and *adv.* A.2, respectively; for the latter, cf. also *adj.* and *adv.* A.5), which also lists the past participle form independently as an adjective meaning "[m]ade level; placed in a level position; aimed, directed." Consider also a now obsolete meaning, surviving in "level-headed," as "[e]quipoised, steady" (*OED* "level" *a.* and *adv.* A.7.a). The pun is not listed in Edward Le Comte, *A Dictionary of Puns in Milton's English Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

<sup>18</sup> Satan utters two soliloquies (4.358–92 and 505–35). In between, pretending to play with other animals, he spies on Adam and Eve (4.395–408), who have a lengthy dialogue about their edenic duties (4.408–39) and Eve's earliest memories (4.440–91). Satan then takes off roaming the land (4.536–38) while we meet the angelic guards (4.543–54) and witness Uriel's visit to them (4.555–97).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ittzés, "Till by Degrees," esp. 150–52.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Gábor Ittzés, "Milton's Sun in the Zodiac," *Notes and Queries* 250 (n.s. 52) (2005): 308–9.

but it is not unjustified. The night we are entering will be that of Eve's first temptation.

First, however, we observe Adam and Eve's evening ritual. They chat for a while after supper, say their evening prayers and retire to the bower to have sex, which occasions the bard to comment on marital love (4.598–775). The last lines of the epithalamion address the “Blest pair” (4.774) in their sleep, subtly signalling the progress of action.

In addition to what we have seen so far, Milton provides temporal clues on yet another level to reassure chronological orientation throughout the long twilight narrative (4.288–775). Not only is the passage packed with explicit time indicators, many already referenced, but the characters' words as well as the similes also constantly evoke the declining day. The whole scene begins with a splendid, and vastly complex, period unfavourably comparing other famous gardens with the beauty beheld by Satan.

Not that fair field  
Of Enna [. . .] / [. . .] might with this Paradise  
Of Eden strive; [. . .]  
Nor where Abassin kings their issue guard,  
Mount Amara, [. . .] / [. . .] enclosed with shining rock,  
A whole day's journey high. (4.268–84)

This is the last, discarded, comparison in a long series before we actually turn to Satan as he catches sight of Adam and Eve, on their way home at the end of the working day as we later learn. The parallel is understated but effective. Mount Amara, where we are invited by the simile despite the negation undercutting the identification, can only be reached at the *end* of “a whole day's journey.” Ever so subtly, the scene setting already evokes a sense of approaching evening in the reader. Similarly, Uriel arrives “swift as a shooting star / In autumn thwarts the night” (4.556–57); love “lights / His constant lamp” (4.763–64) in the marriage bed and not at the “midnight ball” (4.768)—all characteristically darkness metaphors evoking eventide. Adam and Eve's after-dinner conversation also revolves around evening topics with “night” and related terms occurring a dozen times in eighty lines<sup>21</sup>—a frequency nowhere quite matched in *Paradise Lost*.

The “night measured with her shadowy cone / Half way up hill this sublunar vault” (4.776–77) when, following up on his promise to Uriel, Gabriel gave orders to the angelic guards to comb through Paradise for the

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. 4.611, 613, 633, 647, 654, 657, 665, 674, 680, 682, 685, 688.

intruder. As has long been recognised,<sup>22</sup> the earth's conical shadow functions here as a cosmic sundial. The circling cone completes a full round in twenty-four hours. Its axis is "horizontal" (is in an east-west position) at six o'clock, and its tip reaches the zenith at midnight, when the sun is at the nadir beneath the earth. It thus covers the quarter arc in six hours. If it has climbed half-way up, it must be nine o'clock in the evening (Figure 2).

Ithuriel and Zephon find Satan "Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve" (4.800), tempting her in a dream. They take him to Gabriel, but a sign in the sky prevents their combat. Instead, Satan decides to flee, which brings book 4 to a conclusion.

While the last scene's opening chronographia is beyond dispute, the exact time of Satan's departure is a matter of some debate. What we know is that after his near-clash with Gabriel, prevented by God's "golden scales" "Hung forth in heaven" (4.997), Satan "fled / Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of night" (4.1014–15). Fowler argues that if Gabriel tells his opponent to "look up" (4.1010, 1013), Libra must be near the zenith.<sup>23</sup> "At sunrise, however, Libra sets beneath the [western] horizon; Satan would not need to look up."<sup>24</sup> "Numerologically," Fowler advances another observation in favour of his reading, "iv 777 *measured* the *Half way* moment between iv 539 (six o'clock, when the sun 'in utmost

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Patrick Hume, *Annotations on Milton's Paradise Lost* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1695), 162; Richard Bentley, ed., *Paradise Lost: A New Edition* (London, 1732), 135n; Jonathan Richardson, *Father and Son, Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost* (London, 1734), 177–78; Newton, *Paradise Lost*, 1:288n–289n and Henry J. Todd, ed., *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, 4 vols., 4th ed. (London, 1842), 2:100n, both quoting Richardson and Bentley; David Masson, ed., *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1874), 1:359n; Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose* (Indianapolis: Odyssey, 1976), 296n; Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 267n. See also Gunnar Qvarnström, *The Enchanted Palace: Some Aspects of Paradise Lost* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 33 and Harinder S. Marjara, *Contemplation of Created Things: Science in Paradise Lost* (Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 196–98.

<sup>23</sup> Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 280n. Note that in Milton's prelapsarian cosmos, where the celestial equator and the ecliptic coincide, a zodiacal constellation can only be on the zenith in a strict sense if Eden is supposed to be on the equator. That is a tradition Milton incorporates in his poem, but largely to reject it (4.281–85). The garden is probably near the 35°N parallel (cf. 4.208–14). In a weaker sense, however, "zenith" may be understood as "the highest or culminating point of a heavenly body" (*OED n.* 2, classifying this meaning as "loose").

<sup>24</sup> Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 280n.

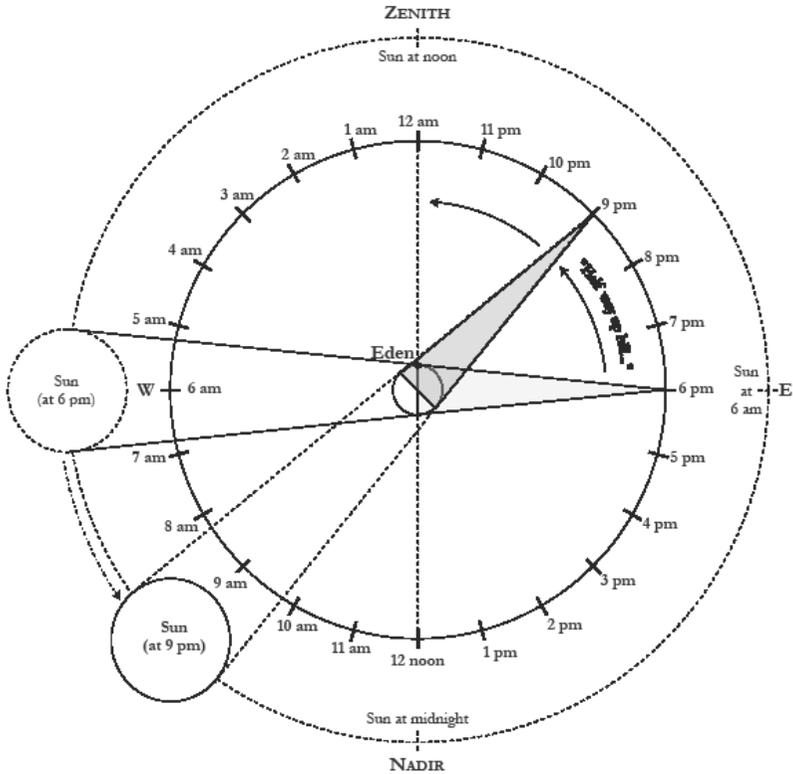


Figure 2. The earth's shadow as an astronomical sundial

longitude' crosses the horizon) and iv 1015 (midnight, when 'the shades of night' first began to flee)."<sup>25</sup> This is insightful but ultimately pure guesswork and cannot serve to establish the timing of Satan's flight.<sup>26</sup> Nor is the textual data sufficient to conclude that "look up" means "look up vertically"—a reading without which Fowler's interpretation does not hold. Qvarnström agrees with my caveats, "The only safe inference that can be drawn from this passage is [. . .] that the Sun as yet *has not risen*. To assign [Satan's escape] to the hour of midnight seems to me to do violence to the text and to superimpose upon it a pedantic precision which

<sup>25</sup> Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 267n–268n (Fowler's italics).

<sup>26</sup> Milton never states that the "halfway" mark refers to anything but the cone's journey from six o'clock to midnight. Independent evidence would be needed to put Satan's departure at midnight.

it does *not* possess."<sup>27</sup> The exact time of the episode cannot be determined with confidence; all we can assert is that it happened some time between midnight and daybreak, probably close to the latter.

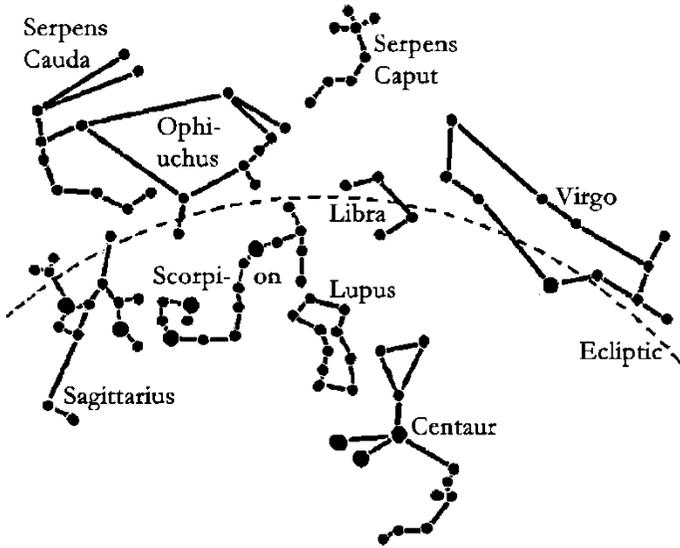


Figure 3. Key constellations in *Paradise Lost*

## 2. The epic's centre

The story directly continues in the next book with the “morn her rosy steps in the eastern clime / Advancing” (5.1–2). We see Adam and Eve wake up and discuss her Satan-induced dream (5.3–136), after which—and some four verse paragraphs after the opening lines—we are reminded that it is still six o'clock: “the sun, who scarce up risen / With wheels hovering o'er the ocean brim, / Shot parallel to the earth his dewy ray” (5.139–41). The image is the perfect counterpart of the previous night's

<sup>27</sup> Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 171–73 (italics original). Cf. Frank H. Moore, “Astrea, the Scorpion, and the Heavenly Scales,” *ELH* 38 (1971): 354 and Clay Daniel, “Astrea, the Golden Scales, and the Scorpion: Milton's Heavenly Reflection of the Scene in Eden,” *Milton Quarterly* 20 (1986): 92, who argue that Scorpio, Libra and Virgo stand for Satan, Gabriel, and Eve, respectively. Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 279n, identifies Satan with the constellation Anguis, unnamed in the text (Figure 3).

sunset. The prelapsarian equilibrium, despite Satan's temptation of Eve during the night, is not yet upset. The symmetry is reiterated in another form as well. In his description of the evening, the bard metaphorised the stars as "living sapphires: Hesperus that led / The starry host, rode brightest" (4.604–5). Now Adam and Eve, though unaware of the identity,<sup>28</sup> hymn it as

Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,  
If better thou belong not to the dawn,  
Sure pledge of day, that crownst the smiling morn  
With thy bright cirlet. (5.166–69)

Once they have performed their devotions,<sup>29</sup> "On to their morning's rural work they haste / Among sweet dews and flowers" (5.211–12). God observes them and sends Raphael to warn them of the danger posed by Satan. The angel departs immediately and arrives at noon (5.137–297), which is variously attested in the epic. God commands him to find Adam "from the heat of noon retired" (5.231). The bard reports his arrival "while [. . .] the mounted sun / Shot down direct his fervid rays to warm / Earth's innermost womb" (5.300–302). Adam takes Raphael to be "another morn / Risen on mid-noon" (5.310–11). And lest we forget how it all began before the meeting is over, Raphael reminds us that he "since the morning hour set out from heaven / Where God resides, and ere mid-day arrived / In Eden" (8.111–12). Upon landing, he is spotted and welcomed by Adam. They have lunch and spend the rest of the day together (5.298–8.653).

In the course of the afternoon, Raphael relates to Adam and Eve the story of Satan's heavenly revolt (esp. 5.561–6.900) and the events of creation (esp. 7.131–634). After Eve's withdrawal (8.40–46) the men discuss, among other things, questions of cosmology. As in book 4, attention is repeatedly called to the gradual progress of time. Raphael is sent to spend "half this day as friend with friend / Convers[ing] with

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. their mention of "ye five other wandering fires" a few lines later (5.177). It may be an oversight on Milton's part. "If intentional, the discrepancy may mime uncertainty as to whether Earth counts as a planet" (Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 292n). Thomas Orchard in *Milton's Astronomy: The Astronomy of Paradise Lost* (1913; reprint, n.p.: Norwood, 1977), 217n, had a simpler explanation: "it is Adam who expresses himself, and, naturally enough, he is unaware that the Morning and Evening stars are one and the same planet. Consequently Venus is again included as the Evening Star, and according to this interpretation of the passage the number 'five' is correct."

<sup>29</sup> Their prayer itself constantly calls attention to its temporal setting in the morning, cf. 5.170, 179, 185–87, 208.

Adam" (5.229–30). He thus acknowledges to his host that he has "these mid-hours, till evening rise / [...] at will" (5.376–77). The ensuing dialogue is punctuated by Adam's references to time. He self-consciously tries to persuade his guest to stay by pointing out how much (or rather, how little) of their allocated time frame they have used up. After their initial after-dinner exchange he observes that "the sun / Hath finished half his journey, and scarce begins / His other half in the great zone of heaven" (5.558–60), that is, it is the very early afternoon. When the angel has finished relating the story of the war in heaven, "the great light of day yet wants to run / Much of his race, though steep" (7.98–99)—it is mid-afternoon. After the dialogue about astronomy (8.5–197) following Raphael's creation narrative, there is still time for Adam's account of his beginnings, for the "day is not yet spent" (8.206). It is only after further exchanges that "the parting sun [that] / Beyond the earth's green cape and verdant isles / Hesperian sets" finally gives Raphael the "signal to depart" (8.630–32). Later Eve also confirms the archangel's departure at sunset (9.276–78). These three and a half books, then, which contain the history of the preceding weeks on the secondary narrative level, take up merely a single afternoon in the first-order narrative.

After the invocation book 9 picks up the story line apparently where book 8 broke it off with a Hesperian sunset (9.48–52, cf. 8.630–32). On closer scrutiny, however, it turns out that the two evenings are separated by a week,<sup>30</sup> and the gap is filled with Satan's journey through darkness (9.53–66, 76–86). That is the longest single episode of the first-order narrative—and one that is perhaps recounted in the fewest lines.<sup>31</sup> The scene is crucial for any reconstruction of epic chronology and has generated not only much critical attention but also a considerable variety of interpretations. Since I have discussed that episode at length elsewhere,<sup>32</sup> I will simply reiterate here that Milton's text seems quite clear to me.

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<sup>30</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the transition, see Gábor Ittész, "The Hero of Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Structural and Chronological Considerations," in *Ritka művészet: Írások Péter Ágnes tiszteletére – Rare Device: Writings in Honour of Ágnes Péter*, ed. Veronika Ruttkay, Bálint Gárdos & Andrea Timár (Budapest: ELTE BTK Angol-Amerikai Intézet Anglisztika Tanszék, 2011), 429–30.

<sup>31</sup> Considering, as is usual though not strictly accurate, the rebels' nine-day stupor (1.50–53) to be part of the second-order narrative.

<sup>32</sup> Gábor Ittész, "Satan's Journey through Darkness (*Paradise Lost* 9.53–86)," *Milton Quarterly* 41 (2007): 12–21, and "Satan's Return on the Eighth Night and Epic Chronology in *Paradise Lost*," in *Építész a köfajtóban: Tanulmányok Dávidházi Péter hatvanadik születésnapjára – Architect in the Quarry: Studies Presented to Péter Dávidházi on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Sándor Hites & Zsuzsa Török (Budapest: rec.iti, 2010), 496–501.

Satan was away for “seven continued nights [. . . and] On the eighth returned” (9.63, 67). That is to say, his travels occupied a full week, neither less nor more.

Table 1 summarises the chronology of terrestrial action so far.

<i>Day</i> <sup>33</sup>	<i>Heaven [Text]</i>	<i>Earth (Cosmos)</i>	<i>Text</i>
Night		Satan enquiring from Uriel at the sun (noon)	3.613–739
		... on Niphates	3.740–4.117
		... surveying Eden and entering Paradise	4.131–83
		... on the tree of life	4.194–395
		... eavesdropping on Adam and Eve	4.396–535
		... roaming the garden	4.536–38
		Uriel’s visit to Eden (sunset)	4.539–97
		Adam and Eve’s evening ritual	4.598–775
		First temptation of Eve	4.799–809
		Satan’s encounter with angelic guard and his flight	4.776–1015
		Adam and Eve’s awakening (sunrise)	5.1–27
		... discussion of her dream	5.28–135
		... morning prayer	5.136–210
		2	Raphael dispatched [5.219–47]
3		Raphael’s arrival (noon)	5.268–391
		... visit (afternoon)	5.391–8.629
		... return to heaven (sunset)	8.630–53
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

**Table 1. Epic chronology from the beginning of terrestrial action to Satan’s journey through darkness**

<sup>33</sup> Day of terrestrial action.

### 3. The fall and its aftermath

Upon his return, Satan re-enters Paradise at midnight<sup>34</sup> then seeks out and descends into the sleeping snake after a soliloquy. He waits in that shape until the new morning arrives (9.67–197), and the human pair again appear on the scene.<sup>35</sup> After much discussion, Adam and Eve separate to be rejoined at noon. Here the narrative is interrupted by a short outburst of lament by the bard, after which enter Satan in the serpent in search of his prey (9.197–423). He finds and encounters Eve alone, leads her to the forbidden tree, and successfully tempts her at midday then withdraws and disappears from the narrative for a while (9.423–785).<sup>36</sup> The noon setting is, again, very carefully documented. Eve first proposes to go off alone and “find what to redress till noon” (9.219). At the separation scene, the bard also confirms the plan “To be returned by noon” (9.401). Later, at the crucial moment of Eve’s fall—between Satan’s great temptation speech and her self-convincing soliloquy—he again clocks the event: “Meanwhile the hour of noon drew on” (9.739).<sup>37</sup>

Having eaten of it, Eve decides, after some deliberation, to share the fruit with Adam, who comes and meets her at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. At the end of their exchange, Adam also eats, and despite some initial cosmic response to original sin they have sex and an unrestful nap, cover themselves with fig leaves, and spend the rest of the afternoon quarrelling (9.785–1189). The relevant time scale is clearly indicated at the conclusion by the bard’s comment that “they in mutual accusation spent / The fruitless *hours*” (9.1187–88, italics added), but there is a touch of irony in leaving the scene open and *not* rounding off this book with a sunset: after all, “of their vain contest appeared *no end*” (9.1189, italics added). Overall, Milton’s treatment of time is so careful throughout this tumultuous day that its chronology from sunrise to the end of the book is beyond dispute.

Book 10 opens with a simultaneous time adverb (*meanwhile*) accompanied by a shift in scenes, which will be characteristic of this book. We now return to heaven for a short time, where the unwelcome news has arrived and occasioned another divine council (10.1–86). The process of information transmission deserves closer scrutiny although it is rarely if ever analysed for its chronological import. On the one hand, there is

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. esp. 9.58 and 181.

<sup>35</sup> The morning dating is also confirmed in retrospect, cf. 9.848, 1135–37.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. 10.332–45, discussed below.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. also 9.780–81 and 1067 for the “evil hour,” on which see Cirillo, “Noon-Midnight,” 219–23.

instantaneous knowledge in heaven of what goes on in Paradise. God is omniscient, and his knowledge is atemporal, which, translated into creaturely terms, means he knows everything without delay (and also ahead of time). As on several other occasions, Milton also makes the point explicitly here:

Meanwhile the heinous and despiteful act  
Of Satan done in Paradise [. . .]  
Was known in heaven; for what can scape the eye  
Of God all-seeing, or deceive his heart  
Omniscient. (10.1–7)

On the other hand, the angelic guards “Up into heaven from Paradise in haste / [. . .] ascended” (10.18–19) with the sad news, which they broke to those they met at the empyrean gates, and then “towards the throne supreme / [. . .] made haste” (10.28–29). Their report and plea of innocence is then approved by God addressing, in the first speech directly presented in the whole scene, the assembled celestial hosts. The episode is reminiscent of Abdiel’s return to God’s court from the rebellious camp. “All night the dreadless angel unpursued / Through heaven’s wide champaign held his way” (6.1–2), but upon arrival he “found / Already known what he for news had thought / To have reported” (6.19–21)—except that in book 10 only God knows, and the messengers’ information is indeed new to their peers.

On the basis of “haste” mentioned twice in the description (10.17 and 29), it has been suggested that the guards’ “flight to Heaven is more speedy than usual.”<sup>38</sup> That need not be the case, however, at least in the sense of affecting epic chronology. As we have seen, it took Raphael some six hours to cover the distance from heaven to Paradise at a speed that is decidedly anything but leisurely (8.110–14).<sup>39</sup> If we take, as is common,<sup>40</sup> that journey to be paradigmatic, the guards’ haste may and need not have saved a great amount of time and may primarily refer to their best intentions: their sad news drives them on; they want to be unburdened of its weight as soon as possible. If they set out just after the deed, which is not stated but can be presumed, and travel at, or just over, Raphael’s (rather impressive) speed, they can arrive in heaven by sunset (paradisaal time). The ensuing council is not particularly long, and when the Son sets

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<sup>38</sup> Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 41.

<sup>39</sup> Satan’s first arrival in book 3 may constitute a parallel case, but that episode falls just outside the timeframe of terrestrial action discussed in this paper.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. n. 72, below.

out to execute its resolution, he descends instantaneously, and this divine feature of his movement is explicitly emphasised (10.90–91). That he arrives in Eden at sunset retrospectively confirms my reconstruction that the council was held in the very late afternoon, allowing the guards enough time to return from their outpost to the headquarters at the usual angelic speed.<sup>41</sup> The Son's arrival at sundown further fulfils a divine prediction (10.52–53), and, in addition to being in line with the biblical account (Gen 3:8), it also synchronises the two story lines and brings us back to the same point on the postlapsarian paradisaic timeline where we broke off at the end of book 9. The Son judges and clothes the human pair before returning to the Father (10.97–228).

In a rare instance of a third layer of simultaneous action, the scene now shifts again: “Meanwhile ere thus was sinned and judged on earth” (10.229). Geographically, we are taken back to the gates of hell; chronologically, back to an unspecified moment prior to the fall or, perhaps, the sentencing. The subsequent scene<sup>42</sup> makes it clear that we do not pick up the story at the end of book 2 with Satan's departure but practically at, or immediately after, the moment of the fall. After a short deliberation, Sin and Death set out following Satan and build a vast bridge all the way across chaos to the outskirts of the cosmos, where they meet Satan on his way back from Paradise, mission accomplished (10.230–409). He comes “steering / His zenith” “Betwixt the Centaur and the Scorpion” (10.328–29), which both Qvarnström (despite his earlier guardedness) and Fowler take to be a chronographia indicating precise timing.<sup>43</sup>

The fundamental logic is the same as before. We know that the twelve zodiacal signs circle the earth in twenty-four hours, each being on or near the meridian for two hours. Libra is overhead at midnight, followed by Scorpion and Sagittarius, which Qvarnström and Fowler identify here with the Centaur. If the point between the latter two signs is on the zenith, it must be three hours after midnight (Figure 4). I am not claiming that the reconstruction is wrong, merely that it is conjectural. Its presuppositions include a horizontal axis mundi,<sup>44</sup> a paradisaic vantage point (although the

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<sup>41</sup> Recall that, having got up at sunrise and having subsequently performed their morning devotions, Adam and Eve were already at work when “Them thus employed beheld / With pity heaven's high king, and to him called / Raphael” (5.219–21) to send him on his errand to Paradise. In other words, Raphael's descent does not take six full hours, either.

<sup>42</sup> Esp. 10.238–49, 262–63, 267–69.

<sup>43</sup> Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 42–45; Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 558n–559n.

<sup>44</sup> Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 30; Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 202n.

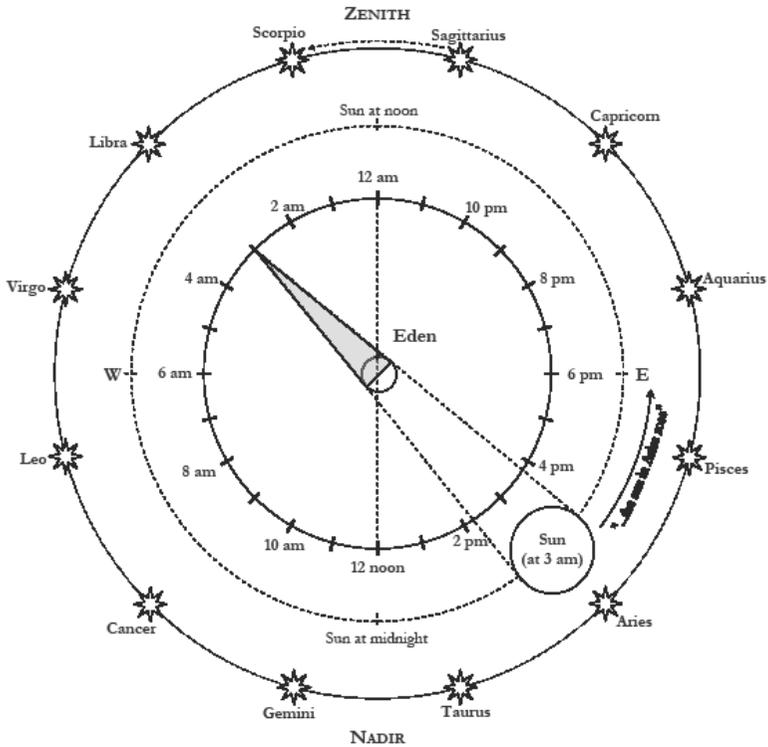


Figure 4. Satan steering his zenith (10.327–29)

observers are Sin and Death at the orifice), and a substitution of Sagittarius for the Centaur.<sup>45</sup> All these may of course be true, but none can be established independently. On a strict reading of “zenith” the chronographia also entails an equatorial Eden,<sup>46</sup> but in a weaker sense of the term Milton’s original phrase, especially with its possessive pronoun referencing Satan (“steering / His zenith”), may altogether loosen itself from the sky above Eden. If the “zenith” here spoken of is not “the highest point of the

<sup>45</sup> The conflation, or confusion, dates back to antiquity, but there *is* a constellation called Centaur, and it makes perfect sense to take Milton’s words at face value. As Marjara, *Contemplation*, 116, recognises, the constellation between the Centaur and Scorpion is Lupus (Figure 3), which harks back to the “prowling wolf” metaphor in 4.183–87. Marjara presents this reading in guarded language, and I need not overstate his case. Lupus at this juncture is as nameless as Serpens.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. n. 23, above.

celestial sphere as viewed from" Eden but the "[h]ighest point or state, culmination, climax" of the archfiend's career,<sup>47</sup> the whole chronographia collapses. It might also be significant that while editors from Hume to Hughes all recognised the cosmic watch in 4.776–77, none of them detected one in this passage. A long and old critical tradition simply saw here Satan's attempt to avoid detection by Uriel by taking a course through the opposite region of the heavens.<sup>48</sup> At any rate, the critical debate is not so much between two conflicting proposals for the particular dating of this scene as about the very possibility of dating it with precision at all. All critics seem to agree that the meeting at the edge of the cosmos takes place some time during the night after Adam and Eve's sentencing.

Inserted in this passage is an atypical flashback of primary narrative<sup>49</sup> summarising Satan's exploits after the seduction of Eve (10.332–45), which not only fills the gap in the archfiend's story but also adds a fourth layer of simultaneity to the events of this most momentous day. When the hellish trinity part ways, Sin and Death descend to earth (10.410–14) while Satan returns to hell and his throne in Pandæmonium, but the response to his victory speech is "A dismal universal hiss" (10.508) as both he and his cronies are turned to snakes and other creepy creatures. Their punishment is made complete with the appearance of some trees whose fruit they desperately desire in hunger and thirst, but that is turned to ashes as they chew it. That is the last we see of the rebel angels in the epic, but the scene is masterfully rounded off (10.414–584). The bard tells us that after some unspecified time they were permitted to return to their native shape, but they are "Yearly enjoined, some say, to undergo / This annual humbling certain numbered days" (10.575–76) although, to cover up their shame, they popularised among the heathen some more respectable myth of their fate.

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<sup>47</sup> *OED n.* 1.a vs. 3.a. The figurative reading makes perfect sense. Satan is now returning as a triumphant general from a victorious campaign, and he does get recognition from his offspring (10.355–56). Previously, he had to withdraw and hide in terror (10.332–41). Later, he is to receive hiss rather than applause (10.504–9). Cf. Cirillo, "Noon-Midnight," 227–30.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Newton, *Paradise Lost*, 2:239n, quoting Pierce; Todd, *Poetical Works of Milton*, 2:415n; Masson, *Poetical Works of Milton*, 1:373n; Orchard, *Milton's Astronomy*, 121–22; Hughes, *Milton: Complete Poems*, 414n.

<sup>49</sup> Another significant instance of the same narrative technique occurs in the description of Satan's journey through darkness (9.76–86). On this passage, see Ittész, "Satan's Journey," 16–17 *contra* Sherry L. Zivley, "Satan in Orbit: *Paradise Lost* IX.48–86," *Milton Quarterly* 31:4 (1997): 133.

Despite a certain blurriness, this final infernal scene has not excited much critical controversy in terms of chronology. In fact, it is generally underappreciated and not much discussed in this context. What Milton does here is nonetheless brilliant. On the one hand, he firmly ties in the infernal episodes with the major time scheme of the primary narrative (recall the manifold “meanwhile” coordinations). On the other hand, however, he takes this chronological thread and elegantly brings it to the “eternal present” of the reader’s time (notice the contemporaneous reference of “yearly” and the shift to present tense verb forms). As hellish time was linked with human experience at the beginning (1.50–52) so is it now again connected to the world as we know it.

With yet another “meanwhile” we shift back to Paradise and Sin and Death, who take possession of their new colony (10.585–613). This scene is observed by, and thus chronologically coordinated with, God asserting his ultimate authority and hailed by the heavenly chorus (10.613–48). At the creator’s order, the consequences of the fall affect nature (10.649–715). The description is generalised as it proceeds and finally comes back to Adam, who “The growing miseries [...] saw / Already in part” (10.715–16). There is no specific time indication beyond the general coordination, but since we find Adam “hid in gloomiest shade” (10.716), the setting recalls his hiding “among / The thickest trees” (10.100–101) before the judgement scene—the last time we saw him. Reinforcing the effect of the numerous layers of general simultaneity, the continuity is thus also established poetically. Adam’s wailing (10.715–862) is specifically dated to the “still night” (10.846) before he is approached by Eve, who has been observing him from a distance. Her words, though initially rebuffed, help the pair gradually find their way to repentance (10.866–1104).

In the entire epic, book 10 has the most complex first-order time structure. Uniquely in the whole poem, it offers a sustained multi-layer parallel account of simultaneous events played out virtually on all stages of the grand drama, heaven, hell, chaos, and earth as well as the outskirts of the cosmos. In the light of this complexity, it has been surprisingly uncontroversial. It clearly narrates the events of the latter half of the day of the fall leading into the night, occasionally picking up threads from earlier books, dropped at around noon of the same day. Apart from the precise dating of Satan’s meeting with Sin and Death, which may be a matter of some dispute, it presents only one major chronological crux, but to grasp it in full we must first analyse the rest of the narrative.

#### 4. An extra day?

Book 11 opens with Adam and Eve's penitential prayer, which now flies up to heaven, where it is graciously received (11.1–66). The movement of the prayer is "dimensionless" (11.17), which is to be understood primarily in a spatial sense but is probably also applicable to the lack of a temporal dimension<sup>50</sup>—an interpretation confirmed by later details. After the ensuing council Michael and an angelic cohort prepare to descend to Paradise (11.67–133). The last "meanwhile" in the primary narrative reveals this scene to be simultaneous with the rise of a new morning in Paradise: "To resalute the world with sacred light / Leucothea waked, and with fresh dews embalmed / The earth" (11.134–36).<sup>51</sup> With that, the focus shifts back to Adam and Eve finishing their prayers: the chronological sequence is established yet once more without any temporal gap. After a short discussion, Adam and Eve see signs in nature and discover Michael's arrival, who delivers God's sentence but reassures them by a promise to reveal future history to Adam (11.136–376). The remaining one and a half books to the final scene are filled by the presentation and discussion of revelatory visions (11.376–12.605). When they descend from the hill, Eve joins them and Michael leads them out of Paradise (12.606–49).

Simple as this sequence of events seems, the concluding books are beset by chronological questions not altogether unlike those that riddle the opening books "that lie out of the Reach of the Sun and the Sphere of Day."<sup>52</sup> What is the precise timing of the individual scenes, especially of Michael's arrival and of the expulsion? How much time elapses altogether in books 10–12 from the judgement to the expulsion, or, specifically, how many days after the fall are Adam and Eve banished from Paradise on the one hand, and at what time do they begin their exile on the other?

The first, and gravest, difficulty is posed by 10.1069–70. Evening falls at the beginning of book 10:

Now was the sun in western cadence low  
From noon, and gentle airs due at their hour  
To fan the earth now waked, and usher in  
The evening cool. (10.92–95)

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. 11.7–8.

<sup>51</sup> For further reference to the new morning, see 11.173–75.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. n. 4, above.

Some 750 lines later it is clearly dark when “Adam to himself lamented loud / Through the still night” (10.845–46). The sun, we have seen, is not described to rise until yet another four hundred lines later (11.133–35). Nevertheless, right in the middle of this carefully drawn long night, Adam speaks as if it were before sunset:

which bids us seek  
Some better shroud, some better warmth to cherish  
Our limbs benumbed, *ere this diurnal star*  
*Leave cold the night.* (10.1066–70, italics added)

Thomas Newton already noted that in book 10

Adam is represented as lamenting aloud to himself, ver. 846. [. . .] Adam is afterwards made to talk somewhat confusedly, in one place as if it was still the day of the fall, ver. 962. [. . .] and in another place as if it was some day after the fall, ver. 1048. [. . .] And having felt the cold damps of the night before, he is considering how they may provide themselves with some better warmth and fire before another night comes, ver. 1069. [. . .] That other night [after the fall] we must now suppose to be past.<sup>53</sup>

On the basis of this analysis, Newton, as we saw in the introduction, extended Addison’s chronology by a day.<sup>54</sup> Anthony Welch has recently picked up the point and turned it into his strongest argument against Fowler’s thirty-three day model. Given the wider context establishing a night setting for the scene, “why does Adam refer to the setting sun, ‘this diurnal Star,’ as if it were currently visible?”<sup>55</sup>

I admit that this is a very strong challenge, and neither Fowler’s avoidance strategy nor his roundabout answer will do.<sup>56</sup> The crucial line (10.1069–70) is truly an odd one. It does imply daytime, albeit the end of it, yet it comes between a sunset and a sunrise where we would expect night-time. Chronologically, it is either anomalous, or the sunset of 10.92–95 and the sunrise of 11.133–36 do not bracket the same night. Newton,

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<sup>53</sup> Newton, *Paradise Lost*, 2:315.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. n. 1, above.

<sup>55</sup> Welch, “Reconsidering Chronology,” 11.

<sup>56</sup> Of course, Welch is later than even the second edition of Fowler, who can only respond to Newton’s objections. He does not comment on 10.1069–70. The tentative explanation he volunteers in connection with 10.773 is certainly insufficient to counter Welch’s protest, “Perhaps the present action takes place on the same night [after the fall]: x 329 does not refer to sunrise over Eden” (Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 582n). At 10.1069–70, the sun appears still to be above the horizon, confounding all previous references to evening and night.

Welch, and perhaps A. H. Gilbert<sup>57</sup> mainly opt for the latter interpretation. I suggest that, given the overall merit of the case, anomaly is the better explanation. Interestingly, the authors I am opposing here implicitly also allow for that possibility. Newton speaks of confusion while Gilbert and Welch, despite raising the difficulty of 10.1069–70, proceed for the most part as though it was nevertheless established that the day of the expulsion followed immediately that of the fall.<sup>58</sup>

We have no other textual evidence than 10.1069–70 to postulate an intermediate day between the fall and the expulsion.<sup>59</sup> In light of the care Milton takes to describe the sunsets and sunrises of each edenic day he narrates in detail, the idea of a full day that is merely identified by Adam's brief remark is itself anomalous.<sup>60</sup> Welch is absolutely right to "suspect that few would confidently argue, as a rule, for Milton's inattention to detail,"<sup>61</sup> yet in this particular case the far more plausible explanation seems to me that the difficulty posed by the "diurnal star" is rooted in superficial revision rather than authorial intention. Naturally, it does not follow that Milton was careless "as a rule." Developing Grant McColley's insight into the compositional order of *Paradise Lost*, Gilbert assigns the

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<sup>57</sup> Allen H. Gilbert, *On the Composition of Paradise Lost: A Study of the Ordering and Insertion of Material* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 36, says that after the cold and damp night following the fall, "the next day he [Adam] speaks of learning" to find protection against inclement weather. Given the new morning in 11.133–36, the expulsion must then come on the *second* day after the fall. Gilbert, however, never puts these pieces together. Moreover, later he explicitly states that Adam and Eve are expelled on the day that follows the night "after the Fall, marked by cold and damp" (*Composition*, 147). Given the nature of his undertaking, this fissure is rather ironic in Gilbert.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Newton, *Paradise Lost*, 2:315n; Gilbert, *Composition*, 147–50; Welch, "Reconsidering Chronology," 10, 15.

<sup>59</sup> "That day" at 10.1050 does not count, *pace* Newton, because it modifies "death" rather than "We expected": "we expected / Immediate dissolution, which we thought / Was meant by death that day" (10.1048–50). Adam is not referring back to a previous day now gone but, in the context of recalling the judgement scene a few hours after the event, he reminds Eve of their earlier expectations based on the original divine prohibition as if he were saying, "We expected that we would have to die immediately because the prohibition said 'The day thou eatst thereof, my sole command / Transgressed, inevitably thou shalt die; / From that day mortal' (8.329–31), and yet he did not kill us right then and there but pronounced milder sentences on us."

<sup>60</sup> On the structural significance of mornings occurring at the beginning of odd numbered books, see Itzès, "Hero of *Paradise Lost*," 431–32.

<sup>61</sup> Welch, "Reconsidering Chronology," 13; cf. Helen Gardner, *A Reading of Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 13.

passages containing the relevant time indicators at 10.92–95, 845–46, 1069–70, and 11.133–36 to different stages in the writing of the epic.<sup>62</sup> I think it is more likely that the poet failed to smooth over the troubling detail of the sun's visibility towards the end of book 10 than that he inserted the passage deliberately indicating a full new day in the chronology.

There is another version of the third-day expulsion, which produces the same numeric result by a rather different route. Zivley, ever ready to champion idiosyncratic readings of small details, finds the extra day not in Adam's reference to a visible sun between what the majority of critics take to be the epic's last nightfall and last morning but in the eclipse after the sunrise that is otherwise uniformly considered to be the poem's last. In other words, Zivley agrees, against Newton and Welch, with what I find the most plausible reading, namely, that the astronomical changes effecting a postlapsarian cosmos, Adam and Eve's quarrel, wailing, and repentance, Satan's encounter with Sin and Death as well as their respective journeys to hell and Paradise all take place during the night between the judgement scene and the morning at 11.133–36.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, she, alone among all critics whose work I have consulted, takes that morning to be the penultimate in the epic's time scheme.

This is the dawn of the first new day after they broke God's commandment. Then the garden is "suddenly eclips'd / After short blush of Morn" (11.183–84). [. . .] With the premature darkness, Day Thirty-two comes to a close. Little has happened since dawn, because this day has been considerably shortened. Here, the darkness of the day is symbolically appropriate to the despair experienced by Adam and Eve. The shortening of this day is also useful for Milton dramatically because he has little action to present on this day.<sup>64</sup>

The refutation of this far-fetched and arbitrary interpretation is hardly an issue. Except for producing darkness, there is little in common between an eclipse and a night. They are perfectly distinguishable phenomena both in astronomical and in lay terms. Rather than their difference, their identity or interchangeability must be established here, and Zivley does little to

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<sup>62</sup> See esp. Gilbert, *Composition*, 36–38 and 152–54. It is somewhat surprising that Gilbert, though constantly on the lookout for internal inconsistencies, does not pursue the anomaly of 10.1069–70 and use it as specific evidence in his elaborate reconstruction of how Milton built the final form of the poem.

<sup>63</sup> Sherry L. Zivley, "The Thirty-three Days of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 34:4 (2000): 122–23.

<sup>64</sup> Zivley, "The Thirty-three Days," 123.

propound it.<sup>65</sup> The symbolic appropriateness of darkness certainly does not demand a night over an eclipse. The shortness of the day is decidedly more useful for Zivley than Milton because only she needs an extra day for which she has no dramatic action to present.<sup>66</sup> Her proposal is therefore entirely insubstantial and can be simply dismissed.

## 5. The day of Michael's visit

The remaining questions concern the internal chronology of the epic's last day. The expulsion obviously marks the end of Michael's visit, and its commencement depends on how one reads the beginning of book 11. That Michael's dispatch has to do with the last morning of the epic has only been challenged by Zivley. Taking the eclipse to represent nightfall, she assigns the angel's visit to hours of darkness, "throughout the night [Michael] shows Adam visions of the future."<sup>67</sup> Three reasons are advanced to substantiate that the scene ends at sunrise:

first, because Michael has been showing Adam visions and talking with him throughout the night; second, because they go to wake Eve, an action appropriate to morning; and, third, because they return to the bower in which Eve had been sleeping and "found her wak't" (12.608), after her night's sleep.<sup>68</sup>

The first and third are only apparent arguments; they merely present presuppositions as evidence, namely, that the revelation takes place at night and that it is "after her night's sleep" that Eve wakes up. There is no independent textual evidence to establish either detail. Nor is the claim any more convincing that waking up itself proves an hour to be morning as anybody who has ever had an afternoon nap will know.<sup>69</sup> Zivley's reading seems to be driven by a typological correspondence she wants to arrive at.

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 53n, who denies all "real existence" to the "Darkness ere day's mid-course" (11.204) blaming it solely on the "carnal fear that [. . .] dimmed Adam's eye" (11.212)—probably overinterpretation, esp. in the light of 11.183–84, coming from the bard.

<sup>66</sup> The insertion of a day at this point is a revealing testimony to the strength of the thirty-three-day chronology developed by Qvarnström and Fowler (cf. Itzès, "Satan's Return," 493).

<sup>67</sup> Zivley, "The Thirty-three Days," 123.

<sup>68</sup> Zivley, "The Thirty-three Days," 123.

<sup>69</sup> I have pointed out elsewhere that the disruption of Adam and Eve's sleep pattern after the fall is expressive of their new status (Itzès, "Hero of *Paradise Lost*," 436).

Adam and Eve's last three days in Eden are, therefore, analogous to the three days which include Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, and Adam and Eve are expelled from their earthly Paradise at approximately the same time of day at which Christ will rise into paradise.<sup>70</sup>

Zivley's chronological reasoning is thus putting the cart before the horse, and her proposal can be safely rejected.

There is no doubt, then, that God dispatches Michael at sunrise (11.99–136). When the angel arrives in Eden is a little more difficult to determine. Qvarnström and Fowler are the only commentators I know who care to be specific. They both suggest early morning.<sup>71</sup> I am less convinced although it is definitely a possibility. However, as Qvarnström also knows, “an angel requires some six hours to get from Heaven to Earth.”<sup>72</sup> Adam comments on the optical phenomena accompanying Michael's arrival, “Why in the east / Darkness *ere day's mid-course*, and morning light / More orient in yon western cloud” (10.203–5, italics added)—closely echoing Raphael's temporal description of his own morning-to-noon journey.<sup>73</sup> It is at least a defensible hypothesis that Michael and his cohort landed in Eden well into the day.<sup>74</sup> I wish to attach no great significance to the exact timing of the cherubim's touchdown and merely want to problematise Fowler's almost self-evident assumption.

As for the expulsion, it is to be expected that Zivley puts it at sunrise, and her proposal need not detain us.<sup>75</sup> Fowler thinks it takes place at

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<sup>70</sup> Zivley, “The Thirty-three Days,” 123.

<sup>71</sup> Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 46; Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 31.

<sup>72</sup> Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 31, and cf. p. 113–14, above.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. “*ere mid-day arrived*” (8.112). It must be allowed that the temporal proximity between sunrise on the last day (11.133–36) and Michael's landing barely seventy lines later is considerably greater than between the sunrise at 5.1–2 and Raphael's arrival (5.298–302). It is not so much the number of lines as the action presented in those lines that makes it difficult to pack a full morning into the first passage. In book 11, only the mute signs of lines 182–90 interrupt the relatively compact dialogue of Adam and Eve, and we lack any indication of their occupation beyond the recorded chat that would be comparable to their morning work in 5.211–19.

<sup>74</sup> “Haste thee” in 11.104 might perhaps indicate a speedier-than-usual voyage, but such an argument would be a highly speculative construct; cf. the discussion of a parallel case in 10.17 and 29, on pp. 113–14, above.

<sup>75</sup> To her list of dubious arguments discussed above, she adds two equally lame reasons: “That ‘*all th' Eastern side . . . of Paradise*’ (emphasis mine [Zivley's]) is lit suggests that the light source is the sun, not just the light of God's sword, which would probably produce a more localized light. [. . .] As Adam and Eve leave Eden, ‘The World was all before them’ (12.646), a clause which implies that they

noon.<sup>76</sup> His position appears to be determined by his desire to literally save the day—"the day" of the interdiction, that is. God had threatened death for violating his command "The day thou eatst thereof" (8.329).<sup>77</sup> Despite the apparent delay in the execution of the sentence, expulsion as symbolic death comes within a day of the fall, provided "day" is rightly understood as a twenty-four-hour period beginning at the time of Adam's disobedience (noon). Fowler has no positive evidence other than that logic on which to base his inference, which remains inconclusive.<sup>78</sup> As before, his construct is elegant but inflated. The exegetical crux Genesis 2:17 presents posed a challenge to biblical interpreters already in antiquity, and the standard explanation was that mortality rather than actual death was meant by the text.<sup>79</sup> Death as a loss of life did not mean for Adam his life's end then and there but the loss of his ability to retain it forever. However long it took him to accurately recognise his new state, only the metaphysical shift is required to fulfil the threatening prediction, and that could happen at the very time of eating,<sup>80</sup> keeping it well within "the day." I might also add that, apart from the archangel's possible arrival at midday, we already had a metaphoric noon in the middle of Michael's visions, at the end of the first aeon of world history, revealed in six scenes: "As one who in his journey baits at noon, / Though bent on speed, so here the archangel paused / Betwixt the world destroyed and world restored" (12.1–3). Taken together, I find Fowler's solution conjectural.

Arguing from the metaphoric import of the closing lines, Qvarnström offers a more convincing view. His reasoning deserves to be quoted at length.

Thus the executive angels, descending from their Hill to expel Adam and Eve, are compared to "Ev'ning Mist": "on the ground gliding meteorous, as Ev'ning Mist ris'n from a River ore the marish glides and gathers fast at the Labourers heel homeward returning" (XII 628). Indeed this labourer on

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are looking at that world in the light of a new day" ("The Thirty-three Days," 123). For a close reading of the epic's closing passage about Michael's sword, although without temporal considerations, see Kester Svendsen, *Milton and Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 105–12.

<sup>76</sup> Fowler, *Paradise Lost*, 31, 582n, and 674n.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. 10.49 and Genesis 2:16–17.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 54n.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1997), 67–71. On Renaissance commentary, not vastly different, see Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor: An Account of the Commentaries on Genesis, 1527–1633* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1948), 131–33.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. 9.792.

his way home in the evening, after his day's work, gives further emphasis to the metaphorical suggestion that this Day is over. This suggestion is further stressed by the lines about Adam and Eve taking their solitary way out of Eden: "the Word was all before them, where to choose *their place of rest*". My conclusion, therefore, is that the epic and its last Day reach "The End" together.<sup>81</sup>

The analysis barely needs augmentation, but G. M. Crump's perceptive qualification, taken from a very similar discussion, is worth recalling, "It is not evening. It is only an image of evening in the midst of [...] the seventh day of Milton's poem."<sup>82</sup>

Table 2 offers an overview of the chronology of the last two days of terrestrial action.

## 6. Conclusion

Terrestrial action begins with Satan's entry into the cosmos, and the first definitely datable episode is his encounter with Uriel at the sun at noon on the first day of directly narrated human time. From then on, Milton, as a rule, carefully indicates the progress of time. Adam and Eve also appear on the scene before this day is over, and the night's chief events include the first, unsuccessful, temptation of Eve and Satan's flight. Day 2 of terrestrial time dawns at the beginning of book 5 and ushers in Raphael's visit. It is also the first day of Satan's weeklong journey through darkness, which thus covers days 2 to 8 of terrestrial time. On the latter six of those days we have essentially no information, but the remaining two days of epic time, the day of the fall and the day of expulsion, are again narrated in full. Terrestrial action therefore extends over ten days as Addison suggested with only the twice two days *in extremis* presented in detail.

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<sup>81</sup> Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 47 (italics original).

<sup>82</sup> Galbraith M. Crump, *The Mystical Design of Paradise Lost* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975), 174. Laurence Stapleton, "Perspectives of Time in *Paradise Lost*," *Philological Quarterly* 45 (1966): 747, concurs, "We do not know what the 'hour precise' is, but [...] the beautiful simile in the lines describing the descent of the Cherubim summons before us a darkening landscape."

Day <sup>83</sup>	Heaven [Text]	Earth	Text	Hell	
Night — 9 — Night — 10 —		Satan's re-entry into Paradise at midnight	9.69–191		
		Adam and Eve's parting for the morning	9.192–403		
		Eve's temptation and fall (noon)	9.412–838		
		Satan's withdrawal	9.784–85		
		Adam's fall	9.838–1004		
		Fallen sex	9.1011–45		
		Council of judgement [10.1–84]	Adam and Eve's first quarrel	9.1066–189	Sin and Death build a bridge
		Son descends to judge [10.85–228]	Sentencing and clothing of Adam and Eve (sunset)	2.1023–33, 10.230–326 10.90–219 10.326–410	across chaos... ... meet Satan
		Verdict about natural consequences of fall [10.613–51]	Sin and Death in Paradise	10.410–14, 585–613 10.414–59	Satan returns to hell...
			"Fall of nature"	10.651–714 10.460–98	... gives speech...
		Adam's wailing ...	10.714–862 10.504–77	... turns into ash-chewing snake	
		... quarrel with Eve and repentance	10.863–1104		
	Council of expulsion [11.1–126]	Adam & Eve's morning dialogue	11.133–203		
	Michael dispatched [11.99–133]	Michael's arrival	11.203–376		
		Visions of future history	11.376– 12.606		
		Expulsion	12.607–49		

**Table 2. Chronology of epic action from Satan's re-entry into Paradise to Adam and Eve's expulsion**

<sup>83</sup> Day of terrestrial action.

Despite Milton's general meticulousness in matters temporal, several particulars have been subject to critical debate. Most of them, however, only concern the internal chronology of a given day and do not affect the overall pattern of epic chronology sketchily summarised in the previous paragraph. The only significant exception, in addition to Satan's sojourn of a week, is the problem of the extra day between the fall and expulsion, raised nearly three hundred years ago in the debate between Addison and Newton. Here, unlike in the longer episode,<sup>84</sup> the evidence is indeed controversial, and the price of overall coherence is the admission of Milton's inattention to this particular detail (10.1069–70). In the other instances I have argued that debated points can be usually settled beyond reasonable doubt; the majority opinion generally holds, and revisionist readings can be safely retired. In some cases (such as the exact timing of Satan's flight or of his meeting with Sin and Death after the fall of Adam and Eve) the critical question may be whether the given episode can be precisely dated or the textual basis is deemed insufficient to uphold the specific interpretation. Nevertheless, the decision will have no major chronological repercussions because these cases have no large-scale temporal import and bear only on the local scene rather than the overall chronology.

It should therefore not be impossible to arrive at a critical consensus about a fundamental epic chronology of terrestrial action in *Paradise Lost* as reconstructed above. But in the light of the previous three centuries' developments, that consensus is not likely to be readily forthcoming (recall the dissenting voices from Addison to Zivley and Welch), and a few further implications of the foregoing analysis might be just as important as the specific reconstructive proposal. I want to highlight three of those in conclusion.

Milton employs time indicators on both the cognitive and the poetic-metaphorical levels. These indicators are never in contradiction, but they might indeed be in complementary distribution. What I call cognitive signals may be direct (as in the descriptions of new mornings dawning) or indirect (as, for example, in the occasional chronographia), and Milton might also use structural indicators as well.<sup>85</sup> I have argued that for a convincing reconstruction of epic chronology the various kinds of Milton's signals are all to be taken into consideration, but that should not serve to licence overinterpretation where textual evidence is lacking.

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. n. 32, above.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. n. 60, above.

Terrestrial action in *Paradise Lost* is presented as a continuous whole. That is not to suggest that occasionally rather complex structures of parallel action could not be incorporated into the narrative or that it might not be interrupted at times. The invocations most obviously punctuate the narrative flow as do the second-order accounts on a large and the epic similes on a small scale. Those punctures, however, do not affect the basic continuity of the primary narrative, which picks up the story line after such interruptions where it was left off before. Milton may also tease the reader (as with the gap between the sunsets at the end of book 8 and the beginning of book 9) but he still carefully signals and defines the discontinuity: he creates the gap, as it were, by filling it. More precisely, he draws our attention to holes in the story by precisely presenting them as well-defined discontinuities and thereby paradoxically filling them in. As a general principle, the primary narrative of *Paradise Lost* is not episodic but continuous; the sequentiality or simultaneity of events is clearly signalled and their linkage consistently maintained.

Milton is not so much interested in specifying the clock time for every single scene in his poem as he is in giving a sustained general sense of time's progress and clearly signalling events at cardinal points on his schedule, chiefly sunset, midnight, sunrise, and noon. Similarly, he uses the scales of days and hours to locate events temporally in his narrative. He never counts the minutes. Where that would be the relevant scale (as in Satan's descent from the sun to Niphates or Uriel's arrival at and return from Eden), he typically presents the scene as virtually instantaneous. Where he is safely within the framework of a day (or part of day), he is content to leave the precise clock time unspecified or simply to signal the general progress of time. These tendencies strengthen rather than undermine the established framework within which those episodes are situated.

It is my contention that these narrative principles are applicable to the rest of the epic as well, but their in-depth exploration in contexts other than the chronology of terrestrial action must await another opportunity. The more limited aim of this investigation was to reconstruct the timeline of events from Satan's landing at the sun to the expulsion and review the contentious issues in that segment of the overall chronology. There we found that the debate between Addison and Newton indeed identified *the* crux of the matter; all other controversies were either possible to settle convincingly or had no significant consequences for the overall chronology. As Milton's text stands, a solution to the problem of the extra day between the fall and the expulsion can only be achieved at a price: overall consistency *and* authorial attention to detail in this particular case

cannot be *both* maintained. Even if the majority opinion falls out in favour of the former, the decision will always call for individual critical judgement.

Milton: Paradise Lost - by David Loewenstein October 2003.Â Chronology. David Loewenstein, University of Wisconsin, Madison. Publisher: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511811289.002>. pp xi-xvii. Export citation. Recommend this book. Email your librarian or administrator to recommend adding this book to your organisation's collection. Milton: Paradise Lost. 2nd edition. David Loewenstein. Online ISBN: 9780511811289. Book DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511811289>. Milton: Paradise Lost - by David Loewenstein October 2003.Â Milton: Paradise Lost. 2nd edition. David Loewenstein. Online ISBN: 9780511811289. Book DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511811289>.