Final paper topics

ENAM 204

Spring 2015

Prof. Marion Wells

Due: Tuesday, May 12th, by 5 PM. Emailed papers, please!

Your paper should be approximately 5 pages long. Remember to stay close to the text as you construct your argument, focusing closely on several key passages! Please feel free to meet with me during the next two weeks to discuss you paper.

Choose one of the following (or construct your own prompt in consultation with me):

1. Discuss the nature of the marriage presented by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, looking both at the pre-lapsarian relationship (4) and the post-lapsarian one (Book 9). Pick out two or three passages that seem to you especially important to discuss in detail. Try to give a sense of what, in your opinion, seems central to Milton's conception of marital "conversation."

2. Discuss the representation of authority in *Paradise Lost*. What constitutes, for Milton, true authority? What is the nature of Satan's authority? What do you make of Milton's boldly construed *poetic* authority?

3. Compare Adam and Eve's narratives of origin. How do they differ? What do their respective memories tell us about the origin of their relationship? How do their attitudes towards their own bodies differ, and what do these differences suggest?

4. Analyze the moment of the fall in Book 9, looking in turn at Eve's decision to eat the apple and then her persuasion of Adam to do the same. What distinguishes their respective decisions? One critic (Stanley Fish) has argued that the transition from a state of sinlessness to sin is “unintelligible”: do you agree?

5. How does the Augustinian notion of the "fortunate fall" relate to your understanding of the end of *Paradise Lost*? How do you understand the notion of the "paradise within"? Look closely at the departure of Adam and Eve from Eden at the close of book 12, and try to give a sense of what Milton seems to be suggesting about their changed state and their future.

6. Discuss the representation of Eden as a geographic space, considering our first view of it (focalized through Satan) and later constructions of it around Adam and Eve’s experience of living and working in the garden.

7. Discuss the way Milton uses rhetoric and logic to convey differences between heaven and hell. Focusing on speeches by Satan (or other fallen angels) and God (or Christ), try to analyze the ways in which Milton seeks to achieve a linguistic representation of good and/or evil.

8. Discuss Milton’s presentation of *passion* in *Paradise Lost*. What function does passion have in Eden? Is passion always either good or bad? How do you understand the function of passion in the fall? You might compare Satan’s demonstration of passion with Adam’s discussion of his passion for Eve.