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THE POWER OF WORDS



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DAYS IN HEAVEN, DAYS ON EARTH:
RAPHAEL'S VISIT AND EPIC CHRONOLOGY
IN MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST**

—◀◁—
GÁBOR ITTZÉS**

Any attempt to reconstruct the epic chronology of *Paradise Lost* has to face two fundamental challenges. The one is the timing of events in “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.”¹ The other basic challenge is the problem of continuity between the timelines of the primary and the secondary plotlines.

Second-order narration permeates the entire epic and amounts to nearly one half of the poem.² Several characters offer “autobiographical” accounts, reconstructing how their life began,³ while others recall additional episodes, great and small. Even an incomplete list would include passages from virtually every book of the epic,⁴ but two episodes stand out. Raphael divulges the prehistory of the opening events in the central part of the epic (Books 5–8), and in a similar yet contrasting manner, Michael reveals the post-edenic future to Adam after the fall (Books 11–12). In this paper, I will examine the former scene specifically from the point of view of the poem’s internal timeframe.

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¹ Joseph Addison, “Criticism on Milton’s *Paradise Lost*: From *The Spectator*, 31 December, 1711 – 3 May, 1712,” *English Reprints*, 8 vols, ed. E. Arber (1869–1871; repr. New York: AMS, 1966), 2: 1–152, here 2: 151 (No. 369, 3 May 1712).

² At least by book count, with six out of twelve books characterized by this feature.

³ See e.g. Adam (8.250–520), Eve (4.449–491), and Sin (2.746–802).

⁴ E.g. Satan’s and Beelzebub’s memory of the war and their former state (1.84–94, 128–133), Chaos’s (2.990–1006) and Uriel’s creation accounts (3.708–721), the latter’s report of the dissembling angel’s visit (4.564–575), Eve’s dream (5.30–93), Raphael’s excursion to the gates of hell (8.229–246), Satan’s version of the fall, including his original journey through chaos (10.469–502).

Raphael's visit to Adam occupies a single afternoon on the level of the primary plotline,⁵ yet it includes the narrative of at least 4+9+7 days, a duration almost twice as long as the entire time span of primary action.⁶ The crucial question concerns how the events in the archangel's lesson fit together with the story that begins with Satan's awakening in hell, and whether there is continuity between their respective timelines. In order to answer that question, however, we must first attend to the internal details of the grand primordial narratives – the war in heaven and the hexaemeron – not least because many of them have been subject to considerable debate in critical literature.

WAR IN HEAVEN

The first temporally identifiable event in *Paradise Lost* is the elevation of the Son “on such day / As heaven's great year brings forth” (5.582–583).⁷ The subsequent night⁸ saw the rise of Satan's rebellion starting at the symbolic hour of midnight (5.667), the flight to the north and the erection of “The palace of great Lucifer” (5.760). Abdiel, the only faithful angel among those tempted by Satan, returns to God's court the next morning (6.1–15).⁹ The new day is occupied by single combat between the loyal and disloyal angels. The rebels invent gunpowder the following night¹⁰ and deploy their cannon on the second day of the war in heaven (6.524). The third day¹¹ of fighting (i.e., day 4, epic time) is given to the Son, definitively to decide the outcome of the battle (see *Table 1*). Thus far all critics are in full agreement, but the precise timing of the events on the last day of hostilities has occasioned some divergent opinions.

Albert Cirillo, who is concerned with local timelines only and does not discuss the overall chronology, states, without elaboration, that “Satan [...] is

⁵ For indications of the slow progress of time, see 5.229–231, 298–304, 309–311, 376–377, 558–560; 7.98–99; 8.111–112, 206, 630–632.

⁶ On the chronology of the primary narrative, see my “Ten Days in Paradise: The Chronology of Terrestrial Action in Milton's *Paradise Lost*,” in *Early Modern Communi(cati)ons: Studies in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, ed. Kinga Földvály and Erzsébet Stróbl (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012, 100–130).

⁷ *Paradise Lost* is cited from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. A. Fowler, rev. 2nd ed. (Harlow etc.: Longman, 2007). See 5.603, 618; Psalm 2:6 and Hebrews 1:5. In what follows, this will be considered the first day of epic time.

⁸ See 5.627, 644–645, 700, 714; see also 9.140–143.

⁹ See Tibor Fabiny's paper “Abdiel” at the HUSSE 12 Conference (Debrecen, Hungary, 31 Jan 2015).

¹⁰ See 6.406–416, 521–523.

¹¹ See 6.684–685, 699, 748–749, 802.

defeated in heaven by Christ at noon.”¹² This detail of his otherwise much-appreciated analysis has not been accepted. Galbraith Crump rejects it in favor of an earlier though equally weakly documented setting. “The War in Heaven [...] comes to an end at dawn on the fourth day (VI. 748).”¹³ The line here referenced surely speaks of the rise of “the third sacred morn,” but that is only the time when the Messiah ascends the chariot, not the time of his complete victory.¹⁴ The Father gave him the third *day* (6.669), not only the third morning. Gunnar Qvarnström presents a more powerful reading. Theologically speaking, events of day 4 are instantaneous, but human limitation requires an accommodated narrative and demands that they be arranged so as to fill up “a whole day, from dawn to sunset.”¹⁵ When the Son drives the rebels out of heaven, they fall for nine days (6.871), which is not to be confused with the nine days they subsequently spend confounded on the fiery lake in hell (1.50–53). Given the war’s end on day 4 and the two nine-day periods of the rebels’ literal fall and stupor, their story will continue on day 23 at 1.53.

Two further events within the timeframe of the war in heaven can be reconstructed from the text. They include the creation of hell and the birth of Sin. We enter the world of *Paradise Lost* through hell but soon learn from Chaos’s reminiscing that it was created shortly before the start of epic action (2.1002–1003). The crucial pieces of information come during the war in heaven. On the first day of battle, God orders the angelic armies under Michael’s and Gabriel’s command to “drive [the rebels] out from God and bliss, / Into their place of punishment” (6.52–53). When the archangel mentions it to his apostate peer, the latter claims it to be a fable.¹⁶ There is further support for the suggestion that this may not be pretended ignorance in the fact that Abdiel does not speak of hell in his original confrontation with the rebels yet mentions it in the opening duel of the war.¹⁷ A chronology that dates the creation of hell to the night of the insurgents’ march to the north (beginning day 2) seems to accommodate all available textual evidence.

¹² Albert R. Cirillo, “Noon–Midnight and the Temporal Structure of *Paradise Lost*,” *ELH* 29 (1962): 372–395, here 376.

¹³ Galbraith M. Crump, *The Mystical Design of Paradise Lost* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975), 165.

¹⁴ The reversal of “day and night” in 1.50 and Mulciber’s fall from morning to evening (1.742–745), Crump’s other two arguments (*Mystical Design*, 165–166), do not carry much weight, either.

¹⁵ Gunnar Qvarnström, *The Enchanted Palace: Some Aspects of Paradise Lost* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 17.

¹⁶ See 6.276 and 291–292.

¹⁷ See 5.803–907 and 6.183.

<i>Day</i>	<i>Heaven</i> <i>Event</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Hell</i> <i>Event [and text]</i>	
1	Anointing of Messiah	5.574–615	Creation of hell (probably) [2.1002–1003, 6.44–55, 738]	
Night	Satan's rebellion	5.657–710		
	(a) Defence council between Father & Son	(a) 5.711–742		
	(b) Rebels' flight to north	(b) 5.743–766		
	First rebel council	5.767–903		
	Birth of Sin; Death conceived	2.749–767		
Night	Abdiel's return...	5.903–6.43		
	... to God's court	War in heaven		
	Single combats			6.56–405
	Rebels' council: invention of gunpowder			6.413–523
	Cannon vs. hills			6.524–669
War council of Father and Son	6.669–745			
4	Messiah's victory	6.746–866		
5	Son's (and perhaps loyal angels') pursuit of rebels through chaos	6.865–866	Rebels' nine-day fall through chaos [6.871–877]	
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				Pursuer(s)' return to heaven

Table 1 *Chronology of the war in heaven and its aftermath (second-order narration, Books 5–6)*

In a spasm of “miserable pain” (2.752), Sin sprung from Satan’s head during his first rebellion, “at the assembly, and in sight / Of all the seraphim with [Satan] combined” (2.749–750). The critical crux here, too, is timing. William Empson objected that Sin’s account contradicted Raphael’s chronology of Satan first knowing pain when wounded by Michael in combat (6.327).¹⁸

¹⁸ William Empson, *Milton’s God* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), 54.

But the quibble does not hold because Raphael, as Fowler rightly points out, “would know nothing of Satan’s feelings at the rebel council.”¹⁹ More significantly, Empson wondered when Sin might have had time to grow familiar (2.761) and conceive Death by Satan.²⁰ Christopher Kendrick also found cracks in the narrative along the lines of Raphael’s and Sin’s apparently different chronologies.²¹ The night of the mutiny is immediately followed by the first day of fighting, the former informs Adam, whereas the latter’s account suggests a more extended period of growing acquaintance and attraction between Sin and her father. Stephen Fallon’s suggestion, building on Sin’s “*Meanwhile* war arose” in 2.767, has gained some critical currency, postulating the simultaneity of the events in the two narratives but allowing for differences in their presentation on the basis of Sin and Death’s allegorical character.²² Simultaneity on Milton’s terms, I suggest, is limited to the relevant unit of time, which, here, is the day. It might be added that Sin’s offspring from her incestuous union with Death are “hourly conceived / And hourly born” (2.796–797). On a similar timescale, the night of the rebellion offers more than sufficient room for the romance of Satan and Sin to develop. Internally, then, the chronology of the war in heaven is consistent, and all critical issues can be satisfactorily clarified. *Table 1* offers a summary of the events of the earliest days of epic action with the corresponding textual evidence.

HEXAEMERON

The Messiah, returning from his great military adventure of expelling the rebels (7.131–136), proceeds to execute God’s creative word (7.174–196). This is an instantaneous event as Raphael explicitly informs Adam and us, but our capacities demand an accommodated version.

Immediate are the acts of God, more swift
Than time or motion, but human ears

¹⁹ Fowler in Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed., 148 (ad 2.752).

²⁰ Empson, *Milton’s God*, 58–59.

²¹ Christopher Kendrick, *Milton: A Study in Ideology and Form* (New York and London: Methuen, 1986), 155.

²² Stephen M. Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 184–185; see Fowler in Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed., 148 (ad 2.752) and Anthony Welch, “Reconsidering Chronology in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Studies* 41 (2002): 1–17, here 7.

Cannot without process of speech be told,
So told as earthly notion can receive. (7.176–179)

What follows is the hexaemeron, the archangel's account of the six days of creation, crowned by the first Sabbath.²³ Milton combines various strands of the biblical narrative into a seamless whole and irons out several exegetical difficulties along the way.²⁴ The overarching temporal arrangement is provided by the seven days of Genesis 1, which lends a very secure and unambiguous internal structure to this episode in chronological terms (see *Table 2*). The interpretive question concerns its anchoring.

In a study that seems to have initiated 20th century interest in the question of an overall epic chronology of *Paradise Lost*, Grant McColley reviewed the theological tradition concerning the length of Adam and Eve's stay in the garden, a detail that Genesis does not specify. Exegetes had made several different proposals, of which two stood out. McColley concluded:

For his separate temptations, Milton selected the periods advocated by the two most authoritative interpretations, one of which maintained Adam fell on the first day; the other, on the eighth. Satan's initial and unsuccessful seduction, he assigned to the day of Creation; the second and conventional temptation he placed precisely one week later.²⁵

McColley used this evidence to construct his overarching chronology and dated Satan's escape from hell, Adam's creation, and Eve's dream to day 23.²⁶ There are several problems with this reconstruction,²⁷ but the chief difficulty lies in

²³ See 7.568, 601; for the individual days, see 7.252, 260, 275, 338, 386, 448, 504, 550, 592, 634.

²⁴ See my forthcoming paper "‘Thus God the heaven created, thus the earth’: The Biblical Creation Story in Milton's *Paradise Lost*," in *The King James Bible (1611–2011): Prehistory and Afterlife*, ed. S. Tóth (Budapest: L'Harmattan), forthcoming.

²⁵ Grant McColley, *Paradise Lost: An Account of Its Growth and Major Origins* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 160.

²⁶ McColley, *Paradise Lost*, 17.

²⁷ First, on the theological view, creation is in the morning, expulsion in the afternoon or early evening, the temptation in-between, probably at noon. Satan's initial attempt that Milton devises is a night event (4.776–809). It does not really tally with the daytime scope of the theological chronology. Worse still, Satan's machinations at Eve's ear must be counted as part of the *second* day, given the Hebraic principle of measuring days from sunset to sunset. Even more significantly, it is highly unlikely that Adam and Eve went to work and God dispatched Raphael to visit them (5.211–274) on a Sabbath, which McColley's reading would inevitably require. Finally and decisively, Raphael could not have found hell closed on the day of Adam's creation (8.229–246) if that had been the day of Satan's escape.

the extraneous nature of the whole reasoning to Milton's epic. Apart from the episode of Satan orbiting the earth (9.58–67), there is not the slightest textual evidence to support the hypothesis. It is patently wrong to work – as McColley and, after him, Crump do²⁸ – backward from the one-week-stay hypothesis, and use it to establish the chronology of epic events. A reconstruction must be based on internal evidence.

[A]fter Lucifer from heaven [...]
 Fell with his flaming legions through the deep
 Into his place, and the great Son returned
 Victorious with his saints[.] (7.131–136)

Given that Satan's falling "Into his place" took nine days, are we to count the days of creation from his expulsion from heaven or from his reception in hell? Does creation begin on day 5 or day 14, epic time?²⁹ "Into his place" in the lines above would probably suggest the latter – only to raise another question. Did the *return* take as long as the pursuit, or did the literal fall from heaven to hell occupy days 5 to 13 with the Son's homeward journey completed on the same day?³⁰ The answer is less than self-evident.

Nor is the matter easily settled when we examine the conclusion of the war in heaven.

Disburdened heaven rejoiced, and *soon* repaired
 Her mural breach, returning whence it rolled.

²⁸ See Crump, *Mystical Design*, 169–172. Crump does not, of course, follow McColley slavishly, but both determine the sixth day of creation as preceding the day of the fall by exactly a week, and Crump argues from the traditional view that the fall took place on a Friday – a detail Milton never as much as hints at.

²⁹ In any case, Welch's claim that – apart from the evidence of Raphael's mission on the day of Adam's fashioning from dust – "the creation could just as well have taken place aeons after the war in heaven" (Welch, "Reconsidering Chronology," 8) is unwarranted since God's speech initiating the creation is explicitly tied by Raphael to the Son's return from victory over the disloyal angels (6.129–138). Besides, Chaos also speaks of Satan's rebellion as having occurred "of late" (2.991) and coordinates the creation of hell and of the six-day cosmos fairly closely though not precisely (2.1002–1004). And, of course, there is no "apart from" the evidence of Raphael's mission. Any interpretation worth its salt must account for that piece of information.

³⁰ That there is a pursuit, seems practically certain, so numerous are the passages to that effect (e.g. 1.169–171, 2.996–998, 3.397–399, 6.865–866; although at 2.771–774, Sin only acknowledges a fall without pursuit beyond the brim of heaven). Whether the Son pursues the rebels alone or is accompanied by angelic hosts is more debatable, but it is a moot point in the present context since the answer does not affect the chronology.

Sole Victor from the expulsion of his foes
 Messiah his triumphal chariot turned:
 To meet him all his saints, who silent stood
 Eyewitnesses of his almighty acts,
 With jubilee advanced[.] (6.878–884, italics added)

Here it seems unlikely that the reconstruction of the wall of heaven³¹ and the Son's triumphal procession would have to wait nine (or eighteen) days after the third day of battle. It would seem more probable that the return is part of the same relatively short scene, observed by the motionless faithful angels, as the cleansing of heaven. Consequently, creation appears to follow the war proper with no temporal gap in-between. Yet this passage, too, comes after a description of the rebels' nine-day fall and thus allows for the return to be dated to day 13 (or 22), epic time.

There is one more detail to consider here. Raphael tells Adam that on the last day of creation he was absent, "Bound on a voyage uncouth and obscure, / Far on excursion toward the gates of hell" (8.230–231). The episode is significant because we learn that the "dismal gates" of hell were "fast shut" (8.240–241), noises of torment and rage were heard (8.242–244),³² and the whole return trip could be completed within a day.³³ This, on the one hand,

³¹ Which opened up, at 7.860–862, before the rebels driven by the Messiah like "a herd / Of goats or timorous flock" (7.856–857).

³² Welch argues that Raphael cannot have heard noises from hell before Satan's awakening because the fiend's first address to Beelzebub breaks "the horrid silence" (1.83) there. Rather, Raphael's acoustic experience "is consistent with Milton's portrayal of the noisy devils *after* they have awakened from their stupor" (Welch, "Reconsidering Chronology," 8, italics original). Discussing the noises, Fowler concludes that they "are chronologically irrelevant, since they may be explained as the noise of Sin and her hell hounds at the gate (ii 862), and since in any case devils were believed to undergo torment during their sleep" (Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1st ed., 27). Further, what the angel heard was "Noise, other than the sound of dance or song; / Torment, and loud lament, and furious rage" (8.243–244). Once conscious, however, the devils, among other things, "sing / With notes angelical to many a harp [...] / Their song was partial, but the harmony / (What could it less when spirits immortal sing?) / Suspended hell, and took with ravishment / The thronging audience" (2.547–555). On the other hand, just lines before opening his mouth to utter his first recorded words in hell, Satan discerns "the companions of his fall, o'erwhelmed / With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire" (2.76–77); hardly a quiet scene. His breaking of silence probably refers to prior absence of speech rather than lack of noise. Thus Welch's objection does not hold.

³³ Dispatched on day 6 of creation, Raphael "returned up to the coasts of light / Ere Sabbath evening" (8.245–246), i.e. the same day. Of course, the limits of angelic speed do not constrain the Son, anyway; see 7.176–179 and 10.90–91.

positively rules out the possibility of creation immediately adjacent to the war proper. That sequence would place Adam's creation on day 10, epic time, when hell cannot yet be shut as the rebels do not arrive there until day 13. On the other hand, it also excludes the possibility of the Messiah's return taking nine days, for that would place creation in the week between days 23–29, with Adam's life beginning on day 28. That, however, is impossible because Satan escapes from hell on day 23. Consequently, the only consistent chronology is that the Son drove the rebels out of heaven on day 4, pursued them through chaos to hell for nine days (5–13, epic time), on the last of which he returned to heaven. Received in triumphant procession, he then went out again to create the visible universe on days 14 to 19.³⁴ Raphael's mission to hell is on day 19, right before the Sabbath celebrating the completion of creation (day 20).

A final piece of the puzzle falls into place if we recall that in Book 2 Sin explains to Satan that she was given the key of hell at the time when the angels fell, "with charge to keep / These gates forever shut" (2.775–776), hence, presumably, on the first day of their unconsciousness (day 14), and not long thereafter Death was born of her previous dalliance with Satan in heaven.³⁵ There is significant dramatic irony buried in the five-book gap of this fragmented narrative. On the one hand, hell-gate is locked tight before creation commences. Creation is good. The new world cannot be tainted by any evil at its inception. On the other hand, Death is born in hell just as the creation of the new world begins. The "birthday of heaven and earth" (7.256) is also the birthday of Death. *Table 2* provides an overview of the events during the week of creation with the corresponding textual evidence.

³⁴ On the Son's departure, see Miklós Péti, "Conceived altogether in Homer's Spirit': Milton's Transformation of an Iliadic Type-Scene," in *Milton Through the Centuries*, 206–218.

³⁵ See 2.777–789 and 762–767.

Day	Heaven [Text]	Cosmos (Earth)		Hell [Text]
		Event	Text	
14	Son's 6-day creative expedition into chaos	Heaven and earth; light, day and night created	3.708–713, 7.216–252	Sin given key of hell; birth of Death [2.771–787]
15		Separation of waters above and below the sky	3.714–715, 7.261–275	
16		Creation of dry land and vegetation	7.276–338	
17		Sun, moon, and stars created	3.716–719, 7.339–386	
18		Sea animals and birds created	7.387–448	
19		Son's return to heaven (evening) [7.551–90]	Land animals and humans created	
		Adam's introduction to paradise and interdiction of tree	7.535–547, 8.295–333	
		Naming of animals	7.493, 8.347–378	
		Creation of Eve	4.449–491, 8.378–484	
		First (unfallen) sex	4.708–719, 8.484–520	
20	Sabbath	First Sabbath	7.591–634	Raphael's journey to hell, gates found shut [8.229–246]
21				
22				

Table 2. Chronology of creation (the rebels' nine-day stupor—second-order narration, Books 7–8)

OVERARCHING EPIC CHRONOLOGY

So far I have argued that an internally consistent chronology can be reconstructed for the war in heaven in a broad sense (the earliest events of the epic, from the Son's anointing to the rebel angels' expulsion and fall from heaven) and that the week of creation can be coordinated with the rest of epic action with reasonable clarity and certainty. That, however, only provides a partial answer to the initial challenge this paper seeks to meet. What still remains to show is that the timeline of Raphael's first grand narrative is contiguous with that of his visit; in other words, that the timescales of heaven (the empyrean) and of earth are commensurate. Days in heaven and days on earth are sufficiently alike to allow for a single overarching epic chronology.

The continuity between narrated time and narrating time would be difficult to deny in the case of the angel's second great story. Adam's coming into being on day 6 of the hexaemeron creates an indissoluble link between the days of creation, presented on the second order of narration, and paradisaic days, whose

progress is carefully plotted throughout Books 3–12 on the first order of narration.³⁶ But how similar the days of the war in heaven are to days on earth, and whether that similarity, or otherwise, allows for a unified chronology of epic action has been debated.

Several critics indeed have assumed that there can be a single timeline of all epic action and offer their own tallies (which need not converge for that reason).³⁷ Many others, however, have specifically denied the continuity between the timescale of the war in heaven and other parts of the epic chronology. Reacting to McColley, Laurence Stapleton argued that “[t]he reader is aware that he should not make a literal comparison between time as he knows it and the time that measures events in Heaven or Hell.”³⁸ He reads the narrator’s and Raphael’s comparative remarks in 1.50–51 and 5.573–583 as emphasizing analogy in the sense of dissimilarity rather than similarity. A generation later S. L. Zivley made a similar point.

One problem with the conclusion of the four major chronologists (McColley, Qvarnström, Fowler, and Crump) is that they count “the dayes of Heav’n” (6.685) as if they were identical in duration to days measured in twenty-four-hour-a-day, earthly time, but there is special evidence in the poem that shows that these are not earthly days but merely “grateful vicissitude[s], *like* Day and Night” (6.8, emphasis mine [S.L.Z.]).³⁹

She was drawing on J. T. Shawcross, who “points out [that] the four ‘days’ during which God begets The Messiah, Satan rebels, and the war in Heaven is fought are ‘not human time,’ but occur *before* the beginning of earth-time,” which begins when “‘the creation of Sun and Moon have taken place.’” Her conclusion is the following: “The chronology of the story of *Paradise Lost* spans four days measured in heavenly time and 33 days measured in earthly time.”⁴⁰

While Stapleton essentially rejected McColley’s approach, Qvarnström and Fowler corrected his computation but took its general thrust very seriously and developed their elegant thirty-three-day chronologies from it back in the

³⁶ For details, see Ittzés, “Ten Days in Paradise.”

³⁷ E.g. McColley, *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed., 16–17; Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 10–54; Fowler in Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed., 31; Crump, *Mystical Design*, 148–181.

³⁸ Laurence Stapleton, “Perspectives of Time in *Paradise Lost*,” *Philological Quarterly* 45 (1966): 734–748, here 734.

³⁹ Sherry L. Zivley, “The Thirty-Three Days of *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 34:4 (2000): 117–127, here 118.

⁴⁰ Zivley, “Thirty-Three Days,” 118, italics original, citing John T. Shawcross, *With Mortal Voice: The Creation of Paradise Lost* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1982), 141–142.

second half of the 1960s. That view became highly influential through Fowler's magisterial edition of *Paradise Lost*, which has remained a mainstay of Milton studies well into the 21st century. Zivley is directing her critique chiefly against their model. Her position is further developed by Anthony Welch, who not only cuts off the days of the war in heaven but breaks up the entire timeline of epic action into small discontinuous sections:

Milton supplies local timelines that correspond roughly to the poem's several settings: heaven, hell, chaos, and paradise before and after the Fall. Each has a characteristic temporal flavor, and each is juxtaposed loosely with the others. The result is the series of fissures in time from setting to setting [...], such as the blurry transition from the end of the war in heaven to the creation of the universe.⁴¹

Hence, Welch's concise thesis: "Milton rejects a single overarching chronology in favor of several."⁴²

The lines are thus drawn, and sides must be taken. A critic engaging in the debate is either a proponent or an opponent of an overarching epic chronology. Yet differences are perhaps not as sharp and inexorable as participants, following a logic of binary opposition, make them out to be. They might rather be a matter of degree. To begin with, none of the authors constructing a single global chronology has done so without major caveats; proponents always qualified their assertion.⁴³ Time, they all agree, is much more complex in *Paradise Lost* than the ticking of a clock, but that should not lead to a rejection of a linear timeline as an analytical tool. Opponents, on the other hand, do not agree just how broken the timeline is. Much as he is taken by perspectives of time, Stapleton does not even tackle the question of chronology in the way most other authors do. Zivley only cuts off the four heavenly days and groups the days of the rebels' fall and stupor with earthly time, specifically taking issue with Shawcross' more stringent approach. Welch does not altogether dissolve timelines à la Stapleton but still allows for much less continuity than Zivley. In other words, opponents are united in their rejection of a single timeline but at variance in their explanations why exactly an overarching epic chronology does not work.

All this, I suggest, is due to the fact that Milton operates with analogy, which requires interpretation. He is fully aware of the difficulty of continuity/

⁴¹ Welch, "Reconsidering Chronology," 15.

⁴² Welch, "Reconsidering Chronology," 14.

⁴³ E.g. McColley, *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed., 16; Qvarnström, *Enchanted Palace*, 11–12; Fowler in Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed., 30; Crump, *Mystical Design*, 166.

discontinuity between his different cosmological realms⁴⁴ and posits an analogous relationship between them as a solution. All critics pick up his relevant signals but interpret them differently. Proponents of a global chronology emphasize the similarity – a kind of qualified identity – between the parts so joined, while opponents accentuate the differences and find the lack of complete identity all-decisive.

I think a case can be made that there is more evidence supporting arguments for a positive reading of analogy than for reading it with a critical edge. First of all, Milton uses hours and days as his fundamental units of time in all realms of his universe. Heavenly and earthly days may in principle be different, but their rhythm seems similar; they equally have morning and evening, daytime and night, an active and a restful half. Chiefly, the very fact that they are both *days* joins rather than separates them. In the Argument of Book 1, Milton explicitly states that “heaven and earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed,” which entails that Adam (and in him, humanity) is not “unimmortal” (10.611) yet. Nevertheless, the very first lines after the opening invocation speak of time as we know it:

Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men. (1.50–51)

Such explicit temporal orientation in terms of our own timescale at the very beginning definitely puts tremendous narrative weight on that unit of time and invites the conclusion that Milton deliberately sets it up as foundational for the whole epic. The day, then, and ultimately the day as we know it, is a unifying link between the various cosmological realms.

On a strict reading, speaking of days prior to the creation of the sun in the middle of the hexaemeron is problematic (to recall Shawcross’ point). The consistency and uniformity of the days of the first week, however, have not been challenged. If the days of Genesis 1 are accepted and seen in continuity with Adam’s world, we have a very important link between heavenly and earthly time. The days of creation belong to both worlds. They obviously pattern time for humans, but they are also sung by the heavenly choir without any indication that their temporality would be different.⁴⁵ More important still, Raphael speaks of his excursion on the day of Adam’s creation (8.229) quite in the same manner as he speaks of days that clearly belong to the heavenly realm.

⁴⁴ See e.g. 1.50–51; 5.574–583; 6.4–15, 685.

⁴⁵ On the angels’ doxological hymn over creation, see Tibor Fabiny, “‘If we pray him’: Varieties of Prayer in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*,” in *Milton Through the Centuries*, 137–149, here 140.

Finally, I have argued elsewhere that Milton's treatment of space is two-sided, and I suggested M. C. Escher's absurd perspectives as apt illustrations for it. Epic space is both like and unlike our world.⁴⁶ It defies Euclidian geometry and offers a jumble of confused dimensions instead. Yet critics have had no difficulty holding the universe of *Paradise Lost* together conceptually. They have not suggested that there can be no sense of a contiguous, though structured and challenging, universe. Similarly, time in the epic is no simple matter, and the reader had better be prepared for its complexity and challenges. Yet its fundamental continuity between various parts of the poem need not be given up. Nothing requires us to deny a profound commensurability between the time *in* Raphael's narrative and the time *of* his narrative, the days of which he treats and the day on which he speaks.

CONCLUSION

Milton's treatment of time in *Paradise Lost* is a perennial question, one of the most enduring critical issues in the interpretation of the epic. Both the scope of action, covering all time and encompassing all space, and the two-tiered narrative structure contribute significantly to the complexity of the matter. The episode of Raphael's visit to Adam with its recital of two primordial stories has major repercussions on both counts. By reviewing a broad range of often conflicting critical positions on the one hand and piecing together details through a close reading of the primary text on the other, I sought to demonstrate in the foregoing analysis that it is not impossible to settle interpretive debates and reconstruct a reasonably clear chronology for these substantial sections of the second-order narrative. An understanding of the timing of events may in turn help better appreciate subtleties of Milton's art as we saw above in the simultaneity of the birthday of creation and that of Death.

On a larger scale, Raphael's heavenly narrative raises the question whether different segments of epic action can be arranged along a single timeline. The answer turns on the interpretation of the analogous relationship Milton defines between the separate cosmological realms. Analogy is not identity, which has led many critics to deny the continuity of time between heaven and earth. I have argued, however, that the main thrust of Miltonic analogy is to establish commensurability. Time is measured in days both in heaven and on earth, and

⁴⁶ Gábor Ittzés, "The Structure of Milton's Universe: The Shape and Unity of the World in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Through the Centuries*, 34–55, esp. 51–52.

some days, notably those of the hexaemeron, are days both in heaven and on earth. They serve to create a crucial link between the timelines of Raphael's narrated time and his narrating time. Significant as that connection may be, it does not ultimately override the analogous – that is, less than fully identical – nature of the relationship between heavenly and earthly days. As a result, full critical consensus is not to be expected in this question, and individual judgment will always play an irreducible role in the interpretation of epic chronology in *Paradise Lost*.