(Prince 26). He asserts that a balanced combination of the three good forms offer suitable protection from their flaws. In Rome, the monarchical power was never fully abolished by the aristocrats, and the aristocratic power was never fully abolished by the democrats; the result was that the mixed government “created a perfect republic” (Livy 27). Machiavelli considers this balance to be the leading cause of Roman liberty. Furthermore, he argues that fairly balanced struggles among internal factions foster liberty in the state (29). Despite his distaste for popular rule, Machiavelli credits the Roman success to the creation of the democratic magistrate, the tribune of the plebs. He says, “The desires of free peoples are rarely harmful to liberty, because they arise either from oppression or from the suspicion that they will be oppressed” (31). Machiavelli considers it to be unlikely that the majority would oppress itself; therefore, it will reject any form of oppression from the other factions of government. Machiavelli recognizes that the primary benefit of a republic is that it contains elements from a variety of governing forms. It is in the balance of government that one finds liberty,
sition.\(^2\) Satan, seeing his “perfect image” in Sin falls into a narcissistic lust and takes joys “with [Sin] in secret,” conceiving a “growing burden” in her womb (2.764 – 76). When Satan violates his daughter, he acts in self-absorption, a literal desire to become full of himself, to sate his appetites with himself. Sin immediately follows the tale of her birth with the line “Meanwhile, War arose,” such that syntactically and metaphorically Sin equates this instance of paternal incest with an act of war (2.767). When Satan acts on his selfish sexuality, he begets only ruin. The war that arises as Satan impregnates Sin will cast him out of Heaven and the sex itself generates Death. The product of a self-serving union “[tears] through Sin’s entrails” and “[overtakes] his mother” … “in embraces forcible and foul,” giving rise to the canine monsters that torment Sin (2.783 – 93). Ostensibly, this new trinity serves as a perversion of the original, especially in the way that Sin’s birth matches The Son’s, but the added sexual dynamics herein speak to the way that selfishness becomes a corruptive force and contaminates sexual activity. Death’s offspring, though more wretched than their mother or father, establish the unstable vulnerability of sexual reproduction as well. Rape is obviously a self-serving action with no basis in love or mutual pleasure, and here rape traps Sin in a cycle of paradoxically destruc-

tive birth. The creatures come in successions; they emerge hourly to “gnaw / [Sin’s] bowels,” return to her womb, and “[burst] forth / A fresh” (2.797 – 800). Selfish sex, in this family, holds the potential to deform the body and stain the larger world.

As with Satan and Sin’s tale, Adam and Eve’s life together begins with an immaculate birth. However, the Son sees it fit to create Eve because Adam longs for a companion who will provide him with “rational delights” rather than sensual ones, and because man cannot “converse” with animals (8.391, 96). The Oxford English Dictionary notes that the original sense of the word converse includes dwelling with and having intercourse with another, but Milton’s “Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce” asserts a difference between carnal and rational conversation. Namely, the rational conversant is “a ready and reviving” presence for his or her mate (i); in the words of Raphael, the love that grows out of rational conversation “refines / The thoughts, and heart enlarges” (8.589). So, instead of budding from a corrupted mind, the Son generates Eve from the pure body of a man who longs for a companion to better him as opposed to gratifying him. Once again, like Satan, Adam becomes enamored with the woman born of his flesh upon first sight, but Adam claims that his love for Eve
