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## DOCUMENT A

Extract from Book IX of *Paradise Lost* (1674) by John Milton. Source: John Milton, *The Complete Poems*, Gordon Campbell (ed.), London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Everyman's Library, 1980, p. 328-330.

O *Eve*, in evil hour thou didst give ear  
 To that false Worm, of whomsoever taught  
 To counterfet Mans voice; true in our Fall,  
 False in our promis'd Rising; since our Eyes  
 5 Opend we find indeed, and find we know  
 Both Good and Evil, Good lost, and Evil got,  
 Bad Fruit of Knowledge, if this be to know;  
 Which leaves us naked thus, of Honour void,  
 Of Innocence, of Faith, of Puritie,  
 10 Our wonted Ornaments now soild and staind,  
 And in our Faces evident the signs  
 Of foul concupiscence; whence evil store;  
 Even shame, the last of evils; of the first  
 Be sure then. How shall I behold the face  
 15 Henceforth of God or Angel, erst with joy  
 And rapture so oft beheld? those heav'nly shapes  
 Will dazle now this earthly with their blaze  
 Insufferably bright. O might I here  
 In solitude live savage, in som glade  
 20 Obscur'd, where highest Woods impenetrable  
 To Starr or Sun-light, spread their umbrage broad  
 And brown as Ev'ning: Cover me ye Pines!  
 Ye Cedars, with innumerable boughes  
 Hide me, where I may never see them more.  
 25 But let us now, as in bad plight, devise  
 What best may for the present serve to hide  
 The Parts of each from other, that seem most  
 To shame obnoxious, and unseemliest seen,  
 Som Tree, whose broad smooth Leaves together sowl,  
 30 And girded on our loins, may cover round  
 Those middle parts, that this new comer, Shame,  
 There sit not, and reproach us as unclean.  
 So counseld hee, and both together went  
 Into the thickest Wood, there soon they chose

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35 The Figtree, not that kind for Fruit renownd,  
 But such as at this day, to *Indians* known,  
 In *Malabar* or *Decan* spreads her Armes  
 Braunching so broad and long, that in the ground  
 The bended Twigs take root, and Daughters grow  
 40 About the Mother Tree, a Pillard shade  
 High overarcht, and echoing Walks between;  
 There oft the *Indian* Herdsman shunning heate  
 Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing Herds  
 At Loopholes cut through thickest shade: Those Leaves  
 45 They gatherd, broad as *Amazonian* Targe,  
 And with what skill they had, together sowl,  
 To gird their waist, vain Covering if to hide  
 Thir guilt and dreaded shame; O how unlike  
 To that first naked Glorie. Such of late  
 50 *Columbus* found th' *American* so girt  
 With feathered Cincture, naked else, and wilde  
 Among the Trees on Iles and woodie Shores.  
 Thus fenct, and as they thought, thir shame in part  
 Coverd, but not at rest or ease of Mind,  
 55 They sate them down to weep, nor onely Teares  
 Raind at thir Eyes, but high Winds worse within  
 Began to rise, high Passions, Anger, Hate,  
 Mistrust, Suspicion, Discord, and shook sore  
 Thir inward State of Mind, calm Region once  
 60 And full of Peace, now tost and turbulent:  
 For Understanding rul'd not, and the Will  
 Heard not her lore, both in subjection now  
 To sensual Appetite, who from beneath  
 Usurping over sovran Reason claimed  
 65 Superior sway: From thus distemperd brest  
*Adam*, estrang'd in look and alterd style,  
 Speech intermitted thus to *Eve* renewd.  
 Would thou hadst hearkend to my words, and stayd  
 With me, as I besought thee, when that strange  
 70 Desire of wandring this unhappie Morn,  
 I know not whence possessd thee; we had then  
 Remaind still happie, not, as now, despoild  
 Of all our good, sham'd, naked, miserable.

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## DOCUMENT B

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, BBC/Penguin Books, London, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 52-60.

Charles the Second commissioned a secret painting from Lely. It is a highly typical image of the tradition. Nominally it might be a *Venus and Cupid*. In fact it is a portrait of one of the King's mistresses, Nell Gwynne. It shows her passively looking at the spectator staring at her naked. This nakedness is not, however, an expression of her own feelings; it is a sign of her submission to the owner's feelings or demands. (The owner of both woman and painting.) The painting, when the King showed it to others, demonstrated this submission and his guests envied him.

It is worth noticing that in other non-European traditions - in Indian art, Persian art, African art, Pre-Columbian art - nakedness is never supine. In this way. And if, in these traditions, the theme of a work is sexual attraction, it is likely to show active sexual love as between two people, the woman as active as the man, the actions of each absorbing the other.

We can now begin to see the difference between nakedness and nudity in the European tradition. In his book on *The Nude* Kenneth Clark maintains that to be naked is simply to be without clothes, whereas the nude is a form of art. According to him, a nude is not the starting point of a painting, but a way of seeing which the painting achieves. To some degree, this is true - although the way of seeing "a nude" is not necessarily confined to art: there are also nude photographs, nude poses, nude gestures. What is true is that the nude is always conventionalized - and the authority for its conventions derives from a certain tradition of art.

What do these conventions mean? What does a nude signify? It is not sufficient to answer these questions merely in terms of the art-form, for it is quite clear that the nude also relates to lived sexuality.

To be naked is to be oneself.

To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. (The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object.) Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display.

To be naked is to be without disguise.

To be on display is to have the surface of one's own skin, the hairs of one's own body, turned into a disguise which, in that situation, can never be discarded. The nude is condemned to never being naked. Nudity is a form of dress.

In the average European oil painting of the nude the principal protagonist is never painted. He is the spectator in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a man. Everything is addressed to him. Everything must appear to be the result of his being there. It is for him that the figures have assumed their nudity. But he, by definition, is a stranger - with his clothes still on. [...]

What is the sexual function of nakedness in reality? Clothes encumber contact and movement. But it would seem that nakedness has a positive visual value in its own right: we want to see the other naked: the other delivers to us the sight of themselves and we seize upon it - sometimes quite regardless of whether it is for the first time or the hundredth. What does this sight of the other mean to us, how does it, at that instant of total disclosure, affect our desire ?

Their nakedness acts as a confirmation and provokes a very strong sense of relief. She is a woman like any other: or he is a man like any other: we are overwhelmed by the

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marvellous simplicity of the familiar sexual mechanism.

45 We did not, of course, consciously expect to be otherwise: unconscious homosexual desires (or unconscious heterosexual desires if the couple concerned are homosexual) may have led each to half expect something different. But the "relief" can be explained without recourse to the unconscious.

50 We did not expect them to be otherwise, but the urgency and complexity of our feelings bred a sense of uniqueness which the sight of the other, as she is or as he is, now dispels. They are more like the rest of their sex than they are different. In this revelation lies the warm and friendly – as opposed to cold and impersonal - anonymity of nakedness.

55 One could express this differently: at the moment of nakedness first perceived, an element of banality enters: an element that exists only because we need it. Up to that instant the other was more or less mysterious. Etiquettes of modesty are not merely puritan or sentimental: it is reasonable to recognize a loss of mystery.

60 And the explanation of this loss of mystery may be largely visual. The focus of perception shifts from eyes, mouth, shoulders, hands - all of which are capable of such subtleties of expression that the personality expressed by them is manifold - it shifts from these to the sexual parts, whose formation suggests an utterly compelling but single process. The other is reduced or elevated - whichever you prefer – to their primary sexual category: male or female. Our relief is the relief of finding an unquestionable reality to whose direct demands our earlier highly complex awareness must now yield.

65 We need the banality which we find in the first instant of disclosure because it grounds us in reality. But it does more than that. This reality, by promising the familiar, proverbial mechanism of sex, offers, at the same time, the possibility of the shared subjectivity of sex.

The loss of mystery occurs simultaneously with the offering of the means for creating a shared mystery. The sequence is: subjective - objective - subjective to the power of two.

70 We can now understand the difficulty of creating a static image of sexual nakedness. In lived sexual experience nakedness is a process rather than a state, if one moment of that process is isolated, its image will seem banal and its banality, instead of serving as a bridge between two intense imaginative states, will be chilling. This is one reason why expressive photographs of the naked are even rarer than paintings. The easy solution for the photographer is to turn the figure into a nude which, by generalizing both sight and viewer and making sexuality unspecific, turns desire into fantasy.

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## DOCUMENT C

William Orpen, *The English Nude*, 1900 (oil on canvas, 92 x 71 cm.). Mildura Arts Centre.

