

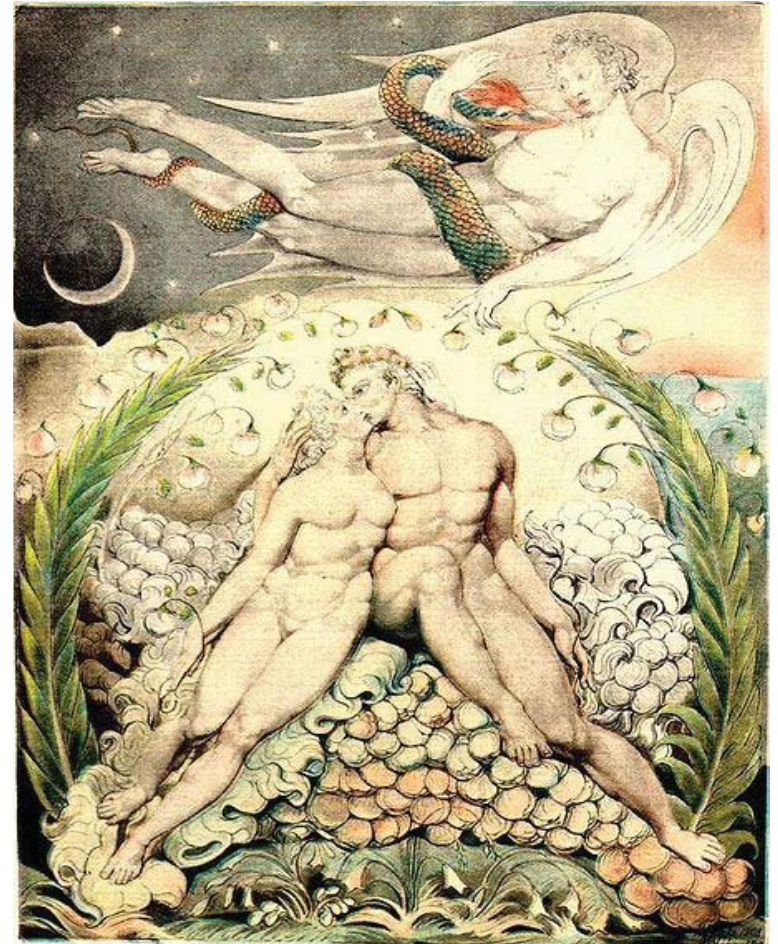
# EPIC & Empire

COLT 311, 22014, Spring 2013, Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00-11:50 pm, THH 106

This course is devoted to careful readings and lively discussions of epic poetry, with a particular focus on its longstanding relationship to empire and its political and religious mission of global expansion. Our readings begin with Vergil and Ovid in ancient Rome and continue through the Italian and English Renaissance. We will pay close attention to the ways in which the Renaissance poets responded to the quite different perspectives on empire presented by Vergil and Ovid: while Vergil's *Aeneid*, the first epic of empire-building, aims to bring diverse literary forms, geographical locales, and nations into a harmonious synthesis, Ovid's counter-epic *Metamorphoses*, tends to emphasize the story of absolute power from the perspective of its victims and casualties. From classical Rome we turn to early modern Italy, and Ariosto's playful romance epic on love and war. Finally, we turn to one of the great epic poems of the English tradition, Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Throughout the course, we will ask how epic narrative helped ancient and early modern writers assess the advantages and costs of political "union without end" over "variety without end," as Milton puts it. This question applies to social relations, global connections, and the domestic union of marriage.

**COLT L/M/CT Track:** This is a **Literature** concentration course.



William Blake, "Watching the Caresses of Adam and Eve"  
(Illustration from *Paradise Lost*) Pen, watercolor on paper (1808)..

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