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Deposited in DRO:

12 January 2011

Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Green, Mandy (2009) 'Milton's Ovidian Eve.', Farnham: Ashgate.

Further information on publisher's website:

<http://www.ashgate.com/isbn/9780754666660>

Publisher's copyright statement:

Additional information:

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Chapter 5

The Vine and *her* Elm: A Marriage made in Paradise

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. II.8-9)

While the garden is a symbol for mankind's rightful place in the world, for how things should have been, Milton's garden is no allegorical or decorative backdrop, but a dynamic, luxuriantly fertile world within which Adam and Eve live and work, a world that supplies their needs and to which they give form and beauty. Milton rightly saw the interpretive possibilities in gardening; the first man and woman are both gardeners whose own right relation is often viewed in horticultural terms, suggesting deeply-rooted affinities between Adam and Eve and the garden they are themselves tending. Eve, like Adam, takes a full and active part in the "sweet Gardning labour" enjoined upon the couple (IV.328).¹ Indeed of the two, Eve arguably reflects more fully the image of God the "sovrain Planter" (IV.691): not only does she partake in the divine power to promote growth, simply by the nurturing power of her presence, but she also displays a deeper sense of vocation, taking more seriously than Adam their duties and responsibilities in the garden.²

Unlike Sylvester for whom gardening was a form of "pleasant exercise" in which Adam indulges, "More for delight, then for the gaine he sought" (*Du Bartas*, II.i.1.323-24), Milton

impresses upon the reader that Adam and Eve's "pleasant labour" (IV.625) in the garden is a vital part of prelapsarian existence.³ It is characteristic of Milton's realizing imagination to recognize that unrelenting leisure would soon pall. Effortless innocence is totally alien to Milton's idea of paradise.⁴ Only the animals in Eden "Rove idle unimploid" (IV.617); "Man hath his daily work of body or mind" (IV.618). Unsurprisingly, there is nothing passive about Milton's concept of life before the Fall, and in this, as John Evans perceptively observes, he "revolutionized the traditional view of Eden and pre-lapsarian Man." (249). Milton's commitment to his belief that humanity's original condition was perfect and contained all things that were necessary for their dignity and happiness, led to a unique balance being struck between Ovidian *mollia otia* ("soft ease") and Virgilian *durus labor* ("hard work"). In Paradise, Adam and Eve's "sweet Gardning labour . . . made ease / More easie" (IV.329-31), but was also essential in a garden whose "wanton growth" (IV.629; IX.211) was by its very nature, "Tending to wilde" (IX.112). The garden demands constant management on the part of the gardeners to contain its burgeoning energies. As John Evelyn maintained in his manual of horticulture, the *Gard'ners Almanac*:

As Paradise (*though of God's own Planting*) *had not been* Paradise longer than the man was put into it, to Dress and keep it; *so, nor will our Garden (as near as we can contrive them to the resemblance of that blessed Abode)* remain long *in their* perfection, *unless they are also continually cultivated.* (Address to the Reader)

Adam (IV.623-29), as well as Eve (IX.206-12), openly acknowledges that, despite their labours, the eagerly growing garden threatens to overwhelm their efforts; indeed, this assessment is confirmed by the narrator himself (IX.201-03).⁵ It seems evident that Milton would have found Evelyn's warning of "*how intolerable a confusion will succeed a small neglect*" apposite, even in Paradise. The repeated emphasis on the need for continuous cultivation adumbrates the way in which gardening, the central activity in Paradise, will have a significant bearing on events leading up to the Fall.

Eve's sphere of agency in the garden is not confined simply to that of the informing presence of the *genius loci*. She is closely observed in a range of gardening activities, pruning, propping and tending the plants of the garden which, on more than one occasion, is seen as her particular domain, bearing evidence of its shaping by the "hand of *Eve*" (IX.438). In her diligent and dedicated cultivation of the arts of gardening Eve most nearly resembles Ovid's fair gardener and goddess of fruit trees, Pomona.⁶ The hard-working Pomona typifies the practical, "hands-on" approach to gardening: pruning, grafting and watering the trees herself. My particular purpose in this chapter is to trace the way in which the first marriage is figured through Pomona's wedding of the vine to her elm. We shall see how Milton's handling of the vine motif becomes a focus for furthering our understanding of the complexities of gender difference and the distribution of power in the first marriage, while at the same time casting light on the significance of Eve's separation from Adam before the Fall and their reunion afterwards.

I

The association of Eve with the vine is unsurprising given the familiar lines from Psalm 128 used in the marriage service: “Thy wife shall be as the fruitfull Vine: upon the walls of thine House,” but in Milton’s hands the identification of Eve with “the fruitfull Vine” becomes more complex and suggestive than is commonly noted, a point of intersection between classical and biblical texts. The vine itself proves to be a composite image, an axis that holds together two opposing aspects of Eve, Janus-like. On the one hand, it proclaims her weakness, her dependence on Adam, and her vulnerability without his supporting presence; on the other it becomes a symbol of her active and independent power, a celebration of her beauty and fruitfulness.⁷ The reader’s dilemma cannot be resolved by merely rejecting one set of implications in favour of the other; we are neither invited nor permitted to choose between them until the morning of the Fall. We must simply accept that the two are placed in dramatic conflict, this very opposition playing its part in propelling the action to its crisis.

Significantly, Eve is first associated with the vine in our introduction to the human pair. It is commonly noted how the passage evolves from visual description into an account of Eve’s relationship to Adam. Her “golden tresses”

. . . in wanton ringlets wav’d

As the Vine curls her tendrils, which impli’d

Subjection, but requir’d with gentle sway,

And by her yielded, by him best received.

(IV.305-8)

The iconographic depiction of Eve's hair advertises the hierarchical relationship between the two sexes in marriage: "Each descriptive detail is," as Harding once observed, "subordinate to one, large, informing idea — the dominant position of man in the relationship between Adam and Eve" (1962, 69). Eve acknowledges Adam to be her "Author and Disposer" in a divinely imposed system in which he is accountable to God, and she is accountable to Adam: "so God ordains, / God is thy Law, thou mine" (IV.635-37). This is a compressed rendering of St Paul's statement of the clear-cut chain of command in which "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God" (1 Cor. XI.3).⁸ This emphasis on the husband's "headship" and the wife's "subjection" is in keeping with definitions of the marital relationship developed by other Reformers.⁹ Rogers argued uncompromisingly that "the first Dutie of the Wife [is] Subjection," (253), while Perkins' definition of "a couple," as "that whereby two persons standing in mutuall relationship to each other, are combined as it were in one," unfolds with a similar emphasis: "And of these two," Perkins continues, "the one is alwaies higher, and beareth rule, the other is lower and yeeldeth subjection" (10). Whatley hammered the point home in his advice on how to be "a good wife": "let her set downe this conclusion within her soule: Mine Husband is my superior, my better: he hath authoritie and rule over me" (189-90). These forthright statements of the inequality of the sexes place husbands and wives in an unequivocally hierarchical relationship of greater and lesser, superior and inferior: "Not equal, as thir sex not equal seemd" (IV.296).

However, in spite of this authoritative pronouncement that sexual difference declares sexual inequality, we need not read the account of Eve's relationship to Adam very searchingly to

become aware of certain unresolved tensions in the passage introducing Adam and Eve. Indeed, while still deferring to the authority of St Paul's pronouncements on gender hierarchy, Milton had tempered them elsewhere to encourage a more positive understanding of this hierarchical relationship, referring to it in *Tetrachordon* as the "golden dependence of headship and subjection," and minimizing the disparity between the sexes by observing that: "it is no small glory to [man] that a creature so like him, should be made subject to him" (*Col.* 4.79, 76). Such tensions can be felt in the work of other writers and is characteristic of an age in which male dominance rested uneasily with mutuality, "Collateral love, and dearest amitie" (VIII.426). It is a difficulty admitted by Goodman; the succession of concessive and qualifying conjunctions (*though, but, yet*) in the following lines are testament to his determination to harmonize notions of equality, superiority and inferiority in a faithful rendering of the conflicted position of a wife in marriage: "Though she be made of the ribs, and every way equall as touching her condition, but for her beauty and comelinesse far excelling man, yet in government she is inferior and subject to man", before being drawn to conclude that for the sake of order, "between man and wife there must be a superior" (253). Such a position sounds clear, but builds in conflict, as Alan Sinfield has pointed out: "The wife is to receive the respect due to an equal partner, but also to be subordinate"; it would evidently be "difficult in practice to decide where affectionate trust and shared responsibility should give way to male authority" (65). The potential for conflict is all the greater when, as in Eve's case, "submission does not remove the impulse towards independence" (Lawrence K. Hyman, 44), exemplified from the outset by her likeness to the vine, whose eagerly growing tendrils demonstrate a natural propensity to reach beyond their proper bounds.

With the first appearance of the vine motif there thus exists some degree of tension between the image of the vine and the narrative assertion it is supposed to complement.

Moreover, the hierarchical scheme apparently set forth so clearly and succinctly in our first introduction to the human couple proves to be further qualified as well as defined by the central image of their marriage, the wedding of the vine to her elm.¹⁰ Let us now look more closely at the scene that unfolds as Adam and Eve set about “thir mornings rural work” in the garden and are observed by God employed

. . . where any row
Of Fruit-trees overwoodie reached too farr
Thir pamperd boughes, and needed hands to check
Fruitless imbraces: or they led the Vine
To wed her Elm: she spous’d about him twines
Her marriageable arms, and with her brings
Her dowr, th’adopted Clusters, to adorn
His barren leaves.

(V.211, 212-19)

This passage illustrates Milton’s ability to include a symbolic episode and hold it up as a mirror to reflect certain less obvious areas of meaning without causing the narrative to pause unduly. It appears shortly after Eve’s account of her disturbing dream to Adam and his comforting explanation of it to her. It is thus, most obviously, indicative of the newly restored peace and accord between the couple after the divisive experience of the previous night, expressed through the harmony of their actions. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by an analysis of the figurative level: the passage, with its heavy insistence on “wedded love” (“wed,” “spous’d,”

“marriageable,” “dowr”),¹¹ ritually re-enacts their courtship and marriage with remarkable precision. As the focus shifts from the gardeners to the garden in line 215, the human couple is transformed emblematically into the vine and the elm they are themselves tending.

II

The emblematic picture of the sturdy elm and the clinging vine underlies Milton’s portrayal of the first marriage¹² and is apparently the means by which he would translate into graphic visual terms the abstract hierarchical conception of a relationship in which Eve’s dependence on Adam is central. That it is employed primarily to symbolize a relationship of support and dependence would seem to be confirmed by the more explicit metaphor of the flower and her prop in Book IX (432-33), and this interpretation appears to gain further support from Milton’s own earlier use of the vine-elm figure in his pamphlet *Of Reformation in England*, where he argues for the self-sufficiency of the Church thus:

I am not of opinion to thinke the Church a *Vine* in this respect, because, as they take it, she cannot subsist without clasping about the Elme of worldly strength, and felicity, as if the heavenly City could not support it selfe without the props and buttresses of secular Authoritie. (Col 3.i.22-23)

In any case, we are sufficiently prepared for a more profound layer of suggestiveness and the way in which the emblem relates Eve to Adam, as vine to elm, by traditional poetic usage.¹³ “The vine-prop elm” (*FQ* I.i.8) remained one of the most cherished items of gardening lore

handed down from Roman writers.¹⁴ Virgil, for example, in a few prefatory lines to the *Georgics*, had proclaimed his intention to instruct his reader when to join the vine to the elm (*ulmis . . . adiungere uitis*, I.2). More pertinently, “The idea that the elm is *wedded* to the vine it supports is,” as Fowler observes, “very ancient: Horace *Odes* II xv 4 [and *Odes* IV.v.29-30] already take its familiarity for granted” (note to V.215-19; emphasis added). In his *Epithalamium*, Catullus seems to have been the first poet to exploit the inherent potentiality of the image for illustrating human marital relationships, but the emphasis lies entirely upon the female vine’s insufficiency without the masculine elm. The vine’s complete dependence upon the elm is used as an exemplum to further the argument of the chorus of young men: the *Iuvenes* are anxious to impress upon the contending chorus of determined virgins the essential benefits of marriage for a woman. Without the sustaining presence of the elm, the vine sprawls in the dust, neglected, blighted, and fruitless:

*Vt uidua in nudo uitis quae nascitur aruo
numquam se extollit, numquam mitem educat uuam,
sed tenerum prono deflectens pondere corpus
iam iam contingit summum radice flagellum;
hanc nulli agricolae, nulli coluere iuueni:
at si forte eadem est ulmo coniuncta marito,
multi illam agricolae, multi coluere iuueni:
sic uirgo, dum intacta manet, dum inculta senescit;
cum par conubium maturo tempore adeptam est,
cara uiro magis et minus est inuisa parenti.*

Just as the unwed vine that grows on naked ground
Can never raise herself, never produce ripe grapes,
But bending down frail body under her prone weight
With topmost tendril's tip can almost touch her root;
Never has farmer tended her and never oxen;
But if she happens to be joined to a husband elm,
Then many farmers, many oxen have tended her:
A maid too while untouched grows old the while untended,
But when in due time she has made an equal marriage,
She's dearer to a man and less trying to her parents.

(Guy Lee)

It is interesting to note in passing that in *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare's only use of the vine-elm topos, the figure is similarly employed to illustrate the vine's utter dependence upon the elm. Again, significantly, no indication is given that the reverse might in some sense be true, or even that the vine herself may have valuable gifts to offer in exchange for support. Adriana, mistaking Antipholus of Syracuse for his twin brother, her husband, addresses him as the sturdy tree to which she, the weak vine, must cling for support:

Come, I will fasten on this sleeve of thine:
Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,
Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,

Makes me with thy strength to communicate.

(II.ii.173-76)

The vine-elm figure would seem, then, the natural emblem to crystallize a hierarchical relationship between the first man and woman. In Book IV, in spite of the undercurrent of tension noted in the passage, the vine-like Eve, once joined to her elm, is seen to be charmingly compliant, all that is submissive, soft, and yielding,¹⁵ but in Book V Milton is presenting a relationship that is subtly different. The hierarchical conception is now substantially qualified as well as defined by the image. Milton's lines in Book V, with their emphasis upon an exchange of gifts (the vine needing support but giving beauty and fruit in return)¹⁶ are closer in feeling, thought, and expression to the use of the vine-elm figure as it appears in a tale original to Ovid, the story of Vertumnus' wooing of Pomona.¹⁷

III

Associated by the Romans with "the movements of the seasons towards ripeness,"¹⁸ Vertumnus in many ways presented the perfect match for Pomona,¹⁹ "the Goddess of Hortyards and their fruitfull productions, taking from thence her name" (Sandys, 661). Experiencing some initial resistance to the idea of marriage from this self-reliant and independent young woman, Vertumnus uses the example of the fruitful marriage of the vine and elm before them to compliment the wood nymph on her gardening skills and to advance his suit. By wedding georgic with nuptial imagery, Vertumnus suggests that Pomona's devotion to promoting the fertility of her garden is too narrowly focused since she is neglecting any possibility of bearing fruit herself:

*ulmus erat contra speciosa nitentibus uvis:
quam socia postquam pariter cum vite probavit,
“at si staret” ait “caelebs sine palmite truncus,
nil praeter frondes, quare peteretur, haberet;
haec quoque, quae iuncta est, vitis requiescit in ulmo:
si non nupta foret, terrae acclinata iaceret;
tu tamen exemplo non tangeris arboris huius
concubitusque fugis nec te coniungere curas.”*

(*Met.* XIV.661-68)

There was a fine looking elm tree opposite, laden with gleaming grapes. After he commended the tree, together with its partner, the vine, he said: “But if that tree trunk stood there unwedded to the vine, it would have nothing for which it might be sought after except for its leaves alone; so too this vine, which is joined to it and rests on the elm, if it were not married, would lie sprawling upon the ground. But you are not touched by the example of this tree and you fly from marriage and do not take care to join yourself to another.

Instead of merely emphasizing the vine’s dependence upon the elm as Catullus had done, Ovid’s usage seems designed to stress the reciprocal nature of the relationship and becomes in his hands an emblem of complementary harmony between the sexes. It is intimated that a man and woman should, like their fruitful counterparts in nature, use their respective gifts to mutual advantage.

Ovid goes even further than this by suggesting implicitly the elm's incompleteness without the vine. By emphatically referring to the elm *sine palmite* as a *truncus* rather than an *arbor*, he is able to draw subtly on the connotations of the adjective, which is used to describe something imperfect in itself, lacking in, or being deprived of something essential. This is appropriate to the deeper dynamics of the first marriage in which Adam is always acutely aware of his incompleteness without Eve: "In unitie defective" (VIII.425).²⁰

While Ovid does concede that without his female companion the elm's shady leaves would still be of intrinsic worth, Milton, as if deliberately answering him on this point, denies even this attribute to be of any value by disparagingly referring to the elm's leaves as "barren" (V.219), an epithet particularly damning in a world in which fruitfulness is the *summum bonum*.²¹ The lines now reflect rather badly on Adam: the elm's height and strength go unmentioned; though emblematically a tree, he is rendered here, by implication, little more than a lifeless stake. This is not a tangential complexity. It may be timely to recall that Adam is first glimpsed by Eve "Under a Platan" (IV.478). Fowler has claimed that this is because "the plane was a symbol of Christ," urging that, "This association seems more probable than those who made the platan tree a symbol of erotic love". However, Milton is almost certainly mining another vein of association here:²² Horace contrasts the bachelor plane, *platanus caelebs*, to the married elm (*Odes*, II.xv.4-5), while in the *Georgics*, Virgil more damagingly refers to the planes as barren, *steriles platani* (II.70), and Quintilian, apparently echoing Horace and Virgil, similarly contrasts the *steril[is] platan[us]* with the elm that weds the vine, *marit[a] ulm[us]* (*Inst. Or.* VIII.iii.8). The upright tree of itself would seem to have little to offer, its only contribution being to promote the vine's fruitfulness. Yet, even this value is cast into doubt for the vine, by contrast, is seen as fruitful and self sufficient, in no need of support. Indeed, in our first view of Paradise,

attention is drawn to “the mantling vine” which “Layes forth her purple Grape, and gently creeps / Luxuriant” (IV.258-60);²³ this is a very different picture from the fruitless, unwedded vines of Catullus and Ovid that languish in the dust.

The vine’s ripe and active fruitfulness takes its place amongst a significant constellation of images substantially linking the feminine principle, and Eve in particular, to abundance, vitality, and life. While female potency pulses on a subterranean level, quickened through imagery and allusion, on the level of surface statement creativity remains an exclusively male prerogative in Milton’s scheme. Accordingly, Landy maintains: “The principle of creativity, the highest principle of the cosmos is denied to woman. The Father and Son bound the cosmos. The male poet creates the epic and the author and disposer of woman is her husband.” (11). So too, Gilbert has insisted that *Paradise Lost* is an example of the “patriarchal etiology that defines a solitary Father God as the only creator of all things”; from this perspective, the poem illustrates the “historical dispossession and degradation of the female principle” (1978: 368, 374). However, such a view is a convenient over-simplification and, in Gilbert’s article at least, serves only to take us back to the old stereotype of “Milton’s well-known misogyny” (374).

The cosmos of *Paradise Lost* is animated by “two great Sexes” (VIII.151, emphasis added). Not only does Milton somehow manage “to introduce a female element into a purely masculine cosmic scheme,” as Watkins suggests (60), but there are even intimations that life is produced by a self-sufficient Nature independently of a male generative principle. In the *Metamorphoses*, the Earth spontaneously gave birth to living things in a range of species after the Flood (*Cetera diversis tellus animalia formis / sponte sua peperit*, *Met.* I.416-7); this self-fecundating power reappears, more surprisingly in Milton’s Paradise, where we learn that in Eden Nature, “Wantond as in her prime, and plaid at will, / Her Virgin Fancies” (V.295-96),

rejoicing in her own creativity. This is a notably “Virgin” Nature, untouched by any creating male agency, yet luxuriantly energetic: “Wantond” and “plaid at will” strongly suggest her exuberance and independent volition. What makes the celebration of Nature’s autonomous powers of creativity particularly striking at this point is that it comes less than half a dozen lines before the sexually charged description of noontime: “now the mounted Sun / Shot down direct his fervid Raies to warme / Earths inmost womb” (V.300-2).²⁴ Yet, as we later learn from Raphael’s lecture on heavenly hierarchies, the sun, for all its penetrative power, is -- unlike the “fruitful Earth” (VIII.96) -- of itself “barren” (VIII.94). As Aers and Hodge have astutely noted, this suggests that, “The apparent excellence of the active male principle is illusory”. So too, the intriguing parallel with human sexuality prompts speculation about the earthly hierarchy: just as fruitfulness begins to seem “the prime end of nature,” perhaps, “man, in spite of doctrine to the contrary, exists for woman? As instrumental to her fruitfulness?” (19-20).

There are, as I have shown, recurrent intimations of an underlying affinity between the abundance and fertility of Eden and Eve herself.²⁵ Recent criticism has remarked how references to the couple’s expected fruitfulness tend to cluster around Eve to the exclusion of Adam:²⁶ she is the *genius loci*, maintaining its fertility and infusing life into the plants.²⁷ Witness the numinous aura that surrounds Eve on her first departure to garden alone: Milton celebrates the nurturing power of *her* presence – the reiteration is strongly emphatic – as, “With Goddess-like demeanour” (VIII.59), she

. . . went forth among *her* Fruits and Flours
To visit how they prosper’d, bud and bloom,
Her Nurserie; they at *her* coming sprung

And toucht by *her* fair tendance gladlier grew.

(VIII.44-47; my italics)

The plants joyously respond to her animating presence and beneficent touch; Friedman has noted the play on “gladlier” in the final line that economically conveys how the delight attributed to the flowers “registers as more emphatic and healthier growth” (130). Confronted with such a powerful account of Eve’s fructifying influence, the lines cannot be discredited as mere hyperbole; indeed, we may be inclined to agree with Adam that, deprived of her informing presence, the fertile garden would rapidly become a dark, desolate wasteland of “wilde Woods forlorn” (IX.910).

Eve possesses her own natural authority in the garden that is distinct from Adam’s,²⁸ and she has a different set of priorities from him.²⁹ Observing Adam entering upon “studious thoughts abstruse” (VIII.40),³⁰ Eve concludes that her time would be more productively spent at work in her garden. Eve not only fosters the natural forces of growth and fecundity inherent in the garden by her mere presence, but by her careful cultivation of the plants therein she shows herself driven by the same desire as Pomona to improve upon the state of Nature.³¹ Although, as Flannagan observes, the narrator declares a clear preference for “profuse natural gardens” over “contrived and regulated” gardens that are the product of overly sophisticated or “nice Art” (IV.241),³² he nevertheless commends the aesthetically pleasing effect of the “thick-wov’n Arborets and Flours / Imborderd on each Bank” (IX.437-38) that give evidence of Eve’s handiwork. In this way, her creative influence on the garden mends the traditional opposition between Nature and Art,³³ and in her gardening capacity, Eve gives practical expression to the

civilizing and refining impulses in mankind that enhance beauty and serve to promote human culture.

IV

The hierarchical scheme apparently set forth so clearly and precisely in our first introduction to the human couple has gradually dissolved before our eyes, blurred by ambiguities and uncertainties, with teasing and elusive suggestions of Eve's self-sufficiency and Adam's insufficiency. In Book V (212-19) the vine easily overpowers the elm, which appears curiously colourless in contrast. All the poetic energy in the description centres upon the vine: once led to *her* elm (the possessive adjective carries an emphatic proprietorial charge in this context), she takes the initiative by actively insinuating the elm into her entwining arms and clasping him in a close, amorous embrace. Erotically charged though this is, it is hard not to read a certain insidious, threatening intent into this embrace, especially given the elm's utter passivity.³⁴ This mysterious female force is the more alarming for being at once yielding and overwhelming: the vine's "curled tendrils imply subjection it is true, but also the kind of encroachment which may ensnare and destroy as well," as Harding has noted (1962, 72).³⁵ Is there a more sinister connection between the luxuriant abundance of Eve's hair and the profusion of the "mantling vine"? It seems at least worth remembering that the natural attributes of the "vine-prop elm" (firmness, strength, durability) were passed over in silence. In the event, the upright elm will itself yield to the pressure of the vine it was supposed to have held erect.

At a subterranean level of the action, both instances of the vine motif have some bearing upon the moment of crisis. It is interesting to speculate upon the possible significance of the parallel progression of events surrounding both examples. The way in which the wedding of the

vine to the elm prompts recollection of the similar tableau in Book IV, when Eve is discovered half embracing Adam as she leaned upon him (494), cannot be ascribed to mere chance. As the scene Eve has conjured up of her initial reluctance to be led to Adam fades, she discloses her dependence on and adherence to him, and, as a token of this, reposes upon him as *vitis requiescit in ulmo* (“the vine rests on the elm,” *Met.* XIV.665). The wedding of the vine to her elm could be said to re-enact emblematically the action in this passage.

Eve has just finished recounting to Adam how she had been found lying beside a pool, vainly engaged in offering “soft imbraces” (IV.471)³⁶ to her own insubstantial reflection. Her Guide had then raised her from this recumbent pose and led her to where she could descry the “fair . . . and tall” (IV.477) figure of Adam who was, henceforth, to be her “Guide” (V.91) and “best prop” (IX.433); God’s ‘redressing’ of Eve to an upright stance is of especial significance in a poem in which there is so much play upon the wider moral implications of physical posture.³⁷ In both the classical and Christian traditions, humanity’s erect stature not only elevated human beings above the other creatures of the earth, indicating their fitting sovereignty over them, but also linked them with their Maker, being in some way expressive of His “image, not imparted to the Brute” (VIII.441). According to Ovid, the creator

finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum.
pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre
iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.

(*Met.* I.83-86)

fashioned man in the likeness of the gods that govern everything. And although all other animals on all fours look at the ground, he gave to man an uplifted face and bade him see the sky and lift his head erect towards the stars.

Indeed, in our first introduction to Adam and Eve, they are distinguished from the other living creatures surrounding them with telling emphasis as being “Two of far nobler shape *erect* and tall, / Godlike *erect*,” who “In naked Majestie seemd Lords of all” (IV.288-90; my italics).

That the upright stance of human beings elevated them above the other creatures was a commonplace of hexaemeral writings that had the authority of a number of classical authors, but Milton’s lines are remarkably close to Ovid’s account in the *Metamorphoses*. Since Sandys in his commentary on the passage emphasized how, “Lastly man was made with an erected looke to admire the glory of the Creator” (58), it is interesting to ponder the significance of Milton’s curiously ambiguous expression that man “*might erect / His Stature*” (VII.508-09, emphasis added). Bentley’s abrupt expostulation, “as if his Erection were superadded to his Form by his own Contrivance; not originally made so by his Creator,” draws attention to the possible ambiguity in these lines. Milton’s choice of words here allows the reader to interpret humanity’s erect stature as conditional upon a proper response to their creation, thus exemplifying the wider freedom of moral action ascribed to human beings by a God who expressly created them “Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (III.99).

The significance of this line of interpretation becomes apparent if we recall that when describing her initial reaction to life and the world about her as she found herself “repos’d / Under a shade of flours” (IV.450-51), Eve outlines a setting that demands comparison with the corresponding section in Book VIII where Adam in turn gives an account of his first moments of

consciousness: “As new wak’t from soundest sleep / Soft on the flourie herb I found me laid” (VIII.253-54). The underlying artistic design is evident: Milton compels us to compare and contrast their respective responses.³⁸ Adam’s first impulse is to look up “Strait toward Heav’n,” and then, “As thitherward endeavoring,” “up [he] sprung,” and “upright / Stood” (257-61) like a fair, tall tree. As in the *Metamorphoses*, man’s erect posture and upturned countenance are designed not only to distinguish him from the animals he is to rule, but also to draw his gaze upward to contemplate the heavens (*Met.* I.84-86). Eve, too, contemplates the sky, but the sky reflected down into a pool beside which she has lain to gaze into its waters. Both Adam and Eve first look at the sky, the one directly, the other at its reflection in the water. This aptly symbolizes their respective relationship with God: Adam was made for God, she for God in him. Thus when Raphael visits them in Eden, Adam is keen “to know / Of things above his World, and of thir being / Who dwell in Heav’n” (V.454-56), as it were looking straight up into the sky, but Eve prefers to hear Raphael’s answers through Adam, at second-hand. Eve prefers physical reality over abstract thought; her way of looking into the sky is to look down at the clear water; her way of apprehending God is through His works, like the vine she is closer to the earth than the lofty elm.

This perspective is supported by Janet Adelman’s perceptive observation that “the newly created Eve finds herself lying down and presumably must stand up to get to the pool, but Milton suppresses the movement: we see her lying down, then lying down again” (61); elided in this way, the passage suggests, as Demetrakopoulos puts it, that “the naturally erect male posture is not so naturally Eve’s” (104). The effect of these deftly managed alternations between the horizontal and vertical planes must be to trouble the reader with as yet half-formed doubts about Eve’s willingness or sufficiency to stand alone. Before being led to her elm, Eve is like the vine,

which unless it is held erect, displays its natural propensity to trail upon the ground, and either “creeps” (IV.259), “crawls” (*Comus* 294) or *terrae adclinata iaceret* (“would lie sprawling on the ground,” *Met.* XIV.666).

So too, it is not by chance that the vine is led to the elm just after Eve’s dalliance with Satan, whom she allows (albeit only in a dream) to supplant the position Adam now holds as her “Guide” (V.91) and to draw her away from his protection and support. The likely result of such a substitution is made sufficiently clear by the ensuing events of the dream itself. Having isolated Eve from Adam’s supportive presence, Satan encourages the growth of discontent within her. “Taste this,” he urges, “and be henceforth among the Gods / Thy self a Goddess, not to Earth confind” (V.77-78). She, aspiring upwards, apparently overreaches herself and, when deprived of her false guide, sinks down again to earth. As Eve herself describing the experience relates: “up to the Clouds / With him I flew” (V.86-87),

wondring at my flight and change

To this high exaltation; suddenly

My Guide was gon, and I, me thought, sunk down,

And fell . . .³⁹

(V.89-92)

Eve falls, but only into sleep; the next time she leaves her true “Guide” and “prop” will result in complete ruin. Eve, as yet sinless, wakes in fear and, recoiling from the “offence” (V.34) of her dream, instinctively clings to Adam. Her innocence is thus symbolically reaffirmed by this embrace and also by the fruitful embrace that the vine bestows upon her elm.

Of course, as is commonly noted, the Satanically-inspired dream enacts the actual circumstances of Eve's fall more nearly than the earlier incident of Narcissistic self-absorption,⁴⁰ for man was not to fall "Self-tempted, self deprav'd," like the devil, but "deceiv'd" by Satan (III.130). Even so, despite the professed moral of the episode that "beauty is excell'd by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" (IV.491-92), Eve's account of her experience by the pool, with its intimation of her preference for the "Fairest resemblance of [their] Maker faire" (IX.538), had, as we have seen, furnished Satan with an invaluable insight into how best to frame his dream temptation, and at the same time reminds us that Eve's beauty may tend to blind both Adam and Eve to a "just estimation"⁴¹ of her human limitations. Adam confides in Raphael his evident anxiety about the significance to be attributed to her richly fruitful beauty. "Inexplicably fuller and rounder than her original, more potent and fecund" (Stone, 37), Eve is perceived by Adam as the culmination of creation, relegating him to the position of inferior prototype in consequence. Female amplitude begins to destabilize the accepted view of gender: woman usurps man's position as the "perfecter sex" (*An Apology for Smectymnuus*; Col. 3.306) so that whatever "she wills to do or say, / Seems wisest, vertuousest, discreetest, best" (VIII.549-50).

V

The first challenge to Adam's headship is posed on the morning of the Fall, when Eve attempts to take the lead in planning the day's activities. As Fowler noted, this is the first time that Eve has taken the initiative in an exchange of this kind between the couple, and the narrator marks the occasion by telling emphasis: "*Eve* first to her Husband thus began" (IX.204). Given Eve's strong sense of calling, it is to be expected that her mind will have been preoccupied by the

way the demands of the burgeoning garden are outstripping their means to manage it. Although Eve ostensibly offers Adam an opportunity to guide her on what course of action they should take, she doesn't hesitate in issuing him with a set of detailed instructions, thinly disguised as alternatives. She has clearly already determined the outcome in advance:

Thou therefore now advise
Or hear, what to my minde first thoughts present,
Let us divide our labours, thou where choice
Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind
The Woodbine around this Arbour, or direct
The clasping Ivie where to climb.

(IX.212-217)

Unlike Adam, Eve is not content merely to “keep” the garden “from Wilderness” (IX.245); she wants to improve upon it, so the initial motivation prompting her suggestion that they garden separately is not so much an attempt to wrest control from Adam nor a bid for independence and personal autonomy, but rather an expression of her desire to maximize their impact upon the garden by instituting a division of labour that will ensure an increase in productivity and efficiency by removing the distraction of amorous “Looks,” “smiles” and “Casual discourse” (IX.222-23). In the exchange that follows it becomes evident that Eve -- like Pomona, for whom her garden was her chief delight and overriding concern (*hic amor, hoc studium, Veneris quoque nulla cupido est*, “This was her love; this was her vocation; nor did she have any desire for love,” *Met.* XIV.634) -- assigns a higher priority to their work in the garden

than to the love between them. Eve has a purpose that not only does not require Adam, but also is better served in his absence; Adam by contrast feels bereft without her. If one cannot imagine an Eden without Eve, there is something curiously appropriate about an Eden without Adam, a Paradise in which Eve tends her garden without human distractions. Adam evidently senses something of this, and such a line of thought plays upon his insecurities. Adam is clearly anxious lest Eve be weary of his company (“But if much converse perhaps / Thee satiate . . .” IX.247-48), and so, when for the first time he is faced with a situation in which Eve is not willing simply to echo his thoughts and feelings, he fails to impress upon her his position as “Head” (VIII.574),⁴² but instead allows himself to be manoeuvred into acting against his better judgement:

But if thou think, trial unsought may finde
Us both securer then thus warnd thou seemst,
Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more;
Go . . .
So spake the Patriarch of Mankinde

(IX.370-73, 376)

Again, as in line 247 above, the opening “But,” remains telling: Adam is abdicating his proper function here, conceding ground when he should be holding firm. Adam rightly believes they are stronger together than apart, but tries to convert his surrender of authority into a command by the emphatic reiteration of the imperative, “Go”. While the reader cannot help feeling with Adam that Eve’s enforced obedience at this point would indeed absent her more than allowing her physical departure -- that she would thereby have been objectified into little more than an ivory

statue or “a liveless Rib” (IX.1154) -- the impression of failed authority remains strong, and is intensified, as Flannagan has astutely observed, by Milton’s choice of epithet for Adam at this point:

“Patriarch of Mankinde,” ironically underscores his possible dereliction of duty: he is not being patriarchal, fatherly, or even “manly” enough to control his wife. . . . After the Fall he will be asked “Was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey” (10.145) and “was shee made thy guide” (146), indicating that Adam abrogated his responsibility when he obeyed her, rather than acting as her guide and commanding her not to go.

Donne’s position was similarly clear-cut, affirming the wife’s proper lack of self-determination which he found symbolized in the circumstances of woman’s creation: “Since she was taken out of his side, let her not depart from his side, but shew her self so much as she was made for, *Adjutorium*, a Helper” (Sermon 17).

It is significant, then, that Adam and Eve are not only observed leading the vine to the elm, but are first discovered engaged in the other important task of the vine-dresser, *pampinatio*, the lopping or trimming of superfluous growth:

. . . where any row
Of Fruit-trees overwoodie reached too farr
Thir pamperd boughes, and needed hands to check
Fruitless imbraces.

(V.212-15)

By describing the boughs or “arms”⁴³ of the fruit-trees as “pamperd,” Milton introduces two mutually supportive chains of connotation. On the one hand, since “pamper” was an accredited derivation from the Latin *pampinus*, a tendril or vine-shoot, it would seem that Milton already has in mind the vine (which he mentions explicitly in the line that directly follows) as one of the fruit-trees in need of pruning.⁴⁴ But of course, on the other hand, “pamper” signifies “to over-indulge (a person) in his tastes and likings generally” (*OED*). I have already observed how, in the first use of the vine motif in Book IV, Eve’s hair is likened to tendrils which “in wanton ringlets wav’d” requiring “Subjection” (306, 308) just as the “wanton growth” of the plants “Tending to wilde” (IX.211-12) requires continuous cultivation.⁴⁵ The very first description of Eve thus becomes immediately enmeshed with Adam’s role as gardener in Eden.

Adam’s task, then, demands vigilance and discipline; it must include the pruning of any ambitious desire for pre-eminence on Eve’s part and the guidance of her back to his side should she attempt to reach beyond him. In *De Doctrina Christiana* Milton had attributed the Fall to Adam’s uxoriousness and Eve’s failure to heed her husband (*uxorius hic, mariti illa inobservantior*; I.11; *Col.* 15.182). The application of this line of thought to the situation in *Paradise Lost* is only possible after the event, when the evidence becomes incontrovertible that Adam has proved remiss in his conduct towards Eve, allowing her to overreach herself and fatally withdraw from his protection and support. Both Adam and Eve fail in their marital duties as conceived by Perkins: the first duty of a wife, he had argued, was “to submit her selfe to her husband; and to acknowledge and reverence him as her head in all things” (310), while the husband was to show his love “in protecting her from danger” (124). “Hence it followeth,” Perkins concluded, “that the woman is not to take libertie of wandring, and straying abroad from

her own house, without the man's knowledge and content" (131-32). In connection with this, it is interesting to note how Adam, in his attempt to persuade Eve not to stray from his side (IX.265-69), argues that his presence "*shades*" and "protects" her (my italics),⁴⁶ implicitly likening himself to the sheltering elm. Significantly, Milton now seems to be attributing a more positive function to the elm's "barren leaves" (V.219). So, too, remembering the earlier allusion to the Platan (IV.478), it is interesting to note Patrick Hume's observation that it was "so named from the breadth of its Leaves, πλατυς Gr. Broad, a Tree useful for its extraordinary Shade: *Jamque Ministrantem Platanum potentibus umbram. Geor.4.*" Adam could have sheltered the vine-like Eve from exposure to the coming storm.

VI

If horticultural lore may be applied to human affairs, Virgil gives the best advice in that part of his farming manual devoted, significantly, to viniculture:

*Ac dum prima nouis adolescit frondibus aetas,
parcendum teneris, et dum se laetus ad auras
palmas agit laxis per purum immissus habenis,
ipsa acie nondum falcis temptanda, sed uncis
carpendae manibus frondes interque legendae.
inde ubi iam ualidus amplexae stirpibus ulmos
exierint, tum stringe comas, tum bracchia tonde
(ante reformidant ferrum), tum denique dura*

exerce imperia et ramos compesce fluentis.

(*Georgics* II.362-70)

As long as your vines are growing in first and infant leaf,
They're delicate, need indulgence. And while the gay shoots venture
Heavenward, given their head and allowed to roam the sky,
Don't use a knife upon them yet — a fingernail
Is enough for pruning their leaves and thinning them out in places.
But when they've shot up and are holding the elms in strong embrace,
Dock the leaves, lop the branches:
Till now they could not bear the steel; now you must show them
Greater severity, curbing their frisky wanton growth.

(C. Day Lewis)

The moral is plain: Adam can afford to be lenient towards the pliant, submissive Eve “that feared to have offended” (V.135), but when she displays increasing assertiveness in the gardening debate, he should have checked this unruly growth more forcefully: *tum stringe comas . . . tum denique dura / excerce imperia et ramos compesce fluentis*.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note too in passing that the primary meaning of *coma* is “the hair of the head,” and only by poetic transference does it come to mean “leaves” or “foliage.” This is especially suggestive in view of the implied connection between the profusion of Eve’s hair and the “mantling vine” and the significance that this has come to assume during the course of the epic.

In addition, when Eve takes her leave of Adam to garden alone she is found to particularly resemble Pomona the gardener-nymph:

[Eve] *Delia*'s self
In gate surpass'd and Goddess-like deport,
Though not as shee with Bow and Quiver arm'd,
But with such Gardning Tools as Art yet rude,
Guiltless of fire had form'd, or Angels brought.
To *Pales*, or *Pomona* thus adornd,
Likest she seemd, *Pomona* when she fled
Vertumnus.

(IX.388-95)

That Milton intends the reader to recall Ovid's account is confirmed by the distinctly audible echoes of this introductory sketch of Pomona in the *Metamorphoses* by which he proclaims his indebtedness. Brown has noted the way Milton advertises the resemblance between the two, "Like Eve she is defined by reference to what she is not, and the gardening tools she carries are contrasted with the weapons of Diana and her nymphs" (111):

*non silvas illa nec amnes,
rus amat et ramos felicia poma ferentes.
nec iaculo gravis est, sed adunca dextera falce,
qua modo luxuriam premit et spatiantia passim
bracchia conpescit.*

(*Met.* XIV.626-30)

She cared nothing for woods and rivers, but only for meadows and the branches laden with ripe apples. She is not laden with a spear, but instead carries a curved pruning hook in her right hand with which she checked wanton growth and trimmed the branches spreading out on every side.

Milton's open allusion to this passage is not perhaps as important as the ironic effect of the camouflaged allusion his lines contain.⁴⁸ For, by the inevitable extension of the comparison between Eve and Pomona, the reader recalls the significant detail that the gardening tool with which Pomona arms herself is the pruning-hook designed to check over-luxuriant growth and "boughes that dare / Transcend their bounds" (Sandys, *Met.* XIV.629-30).⁴⁹ Once again the vine-elm topos thus draws together related passages into a pattern of converging significance and sheds light on future developments. Eve is at once Pomona and the "wanton growth" that should have been pruned, uncurbed here because Adam has failed to check Eve's impulse to independence.

Virgil's firm line would have had the approval of the divine spokesman, Raphael. He had urged Adam:

. . . weigh with her thy self;
Then value: Oft times nothing profits more
Then self esteem, grounded on just and right
Well manag'd; of that skill the more thou know'st,
The more she will acknowledge thee her Head.

(VIII.570-74)

But Adam understandably failed to adopt this deceptively easy formula for managing his relationship with Eve, and it is scarcely surprising if he, and at times the reader too, has found it impossible to get this “crude weighing operation to come out right” (Lindenbaum, 289).

VII

Moreover, until after the Fall, the awareness of personal limitation, dependence, and mutual need is in fact much more acutely experienced by Adam than by Eve.⁵⁰ Indeed, Adam even attributes to her the godlike self-sufficiency that he had reserved for their Creator alone before her creation: “so absolute she seem[ed] / And in her self compleat” (VIII.547-48). Eve’s air of self-reliance is most strongly in evidence on the two occasions when she leaves Adam to garden by herself. It is undeniable that when she leaves him to garden alone on the fatal morning of the Fall she seems particularly vulnerable. Yet the reader cannot but recall the inviolable air that attended her the first time she departs to garden by herself (when she appeared a majestic figure of truly “Goddess-like” stature, not less but more than equal) and wonder at the change. Milton now openly focuses attention upon her inadequacy: Eve is discovered foolishly self-absorbed, lost in her own world, oblivious of any threat or danger

. . . oft stooping to support

Each Flour of slender stalk, whose head though gay . . .

Hung drooping unsustained, them she upstaies

Gently with Mirtle band, mindless the while,

Her self, though fairest unsupported Flour,
From her best prop so farr, and storm so nigh.

(IX.427-28, 430-33)

This brief but delicately executed sketch of Eve, glimpsed as the “fairest unsupported Flour” amongst her flowers, possesses, like the vine-elm figure it parallels so closely, other qualities beside the purely pictorial. The image gathers together the significance of what has preceded and prepares for what follows.⁵¹ Moreover, in contrast to the peaceful gardening activities of Book V, which only incidentally make the reader uneasy, the image here is no longer primarily horticultural: it is explicitly linked with the imminent tragedy at every point. Again, unlike the earlier image of the vine and her elm, the metaphor of the flower without her prop suggests exclusively Eve’s “frailtie and infirmer Sex” (X.956). At the figurative level, at least, the outcome of Eve’s encounter with Satan is never in doubt, but we are encouraged to feel that properly pruned and supported the vine would have been able to weather the storm, *contemnere uentos* (*Georgics* II.360).⁵²

However, the lines above not only prepare for her collapse, “exposed” by Adam to the oncoming “storm,” but also look forward to the more passive and unassuming, but no less important, role Eve is to play when “much-humbl’d” (XI.181) she freely confesses her dependence on him in terms that are clearly significant for the line of thought we have been tracing here, as she acknowledges Adam to be her “*onely strength and stay*” (X 921; my emphasis). As the emphasis now falls upon Eve’s incompleteness without Adam, the image of the vine languishing without her “strength and stay” seems singularly appropriate. Moreover,

only a minute adjustment of focus is necessary to render the scene curiously familiar. Milton introduces Eve's speech with an account of how she approached Adam:

. . . with Tears that ceas'd not flowing,
And tresses all disorderd, at his feet
Fell humble, and imbracing them besaught
His peace.

(X.910-13)

“That physical description,” as Summers recognized, “with its specific recollection of the ‘Tresses discompos’d’ (V.10), the ‘imbracing’ (V.27), and the tears (V.129-35) . . . had characterized Eve’s earlier appearance when she repented merely her dream of sin” (178). Tillyard, too, has commented upon the way in which this earlier scene seems to serve as “a foreshadowing of the human motions of sin, repentance, forgiveness in love and continued life which are played out between Adam and Eve on the heroic scale in Book X” (1930, 74). These observations form a valid and pertinent commentary upon one of the ways in which this central scene prompts recollections of other related incidents and draws them together into a larger pattern of significance. However, we are still making fewer demands upon the lines than they will serve, for the parallel between this scene and the one at the beginning of Book V is more extensive than either Summers or Tillyard’s readings would seem to suggest: they stop short of the critical allusion to the image of the vine and her prop, and the weight of associations this brings to bear on the present passage.

The wedding of the vine to her elm forms, as I have shown, a natural pendant to the scene which directly preceded it and which it parallels so closely, restating emblematically the reconciliation of Eve to Adam after the divisive experience of the dream temptation and “fall.” It is interesting to speculate whether the reappearance of the vine-elm motif betokens a similar significance here. That Milton intends the reader to recall these complementary scenes is confirmed by several significant points of contact. Eve’s words at XI.176 are noteworthy not only for the *volte face* they contain (the reversal of her confident assurance in her own self-sufficiency, which led her away from Adam’s protection and support in an active assertion of independence), but also because it seems no coincidence that Eve is submissively likening herself to a plant in need of support and restraint.

Touched by her prostration before him, Adam “uprais’d her soon” (X.946).⁵³ Adam’s re-dressing of Eve to an upright stance is an action that speaks louder and reverberates more powerfully than any prosaic statement could of the proper relationship of support and dependence, authority and subjection that must now exist between them. The dynamic tension that complicated our attitude to Eve’s relationship to Adam, embodied not only in the narrative action but in the complex patterning of ideas, images, values, and feelings, is now resolved completely. This ultimate resolution paradoxically involves loss and gain. Stripped of her mythological pretensions and self-assurance, Eve’s heroic stature as “Goddess humane” (IX.732) is exchanged for the humility and dependence essential for Christian salvation. By embodying the virtues necessary for salvation Eve becomes, as Sharon C. Seelig argues, “not merely Milton’s ideal of womanhood but the pattern for *all* mankind after the Fall.”⁵⁴

Indeed, the view that the relationship between man and woman was for Milton a type or image of that between God and the soul seems confirmed by the way in which the relationship of

support and dependence between fallen man and woman is seen to reflect the proper relationship between God and mankind after the Fall. Eve's "*lowlie plight / Immoveable till peace obtain'd from fault / Acknowledg'd and deplor'd,*" clearly looks forward to fallen mankind "in *lowliest plight* repentant" (X.937-39, XI.1; my italics). Moreover, this parallelism in turn throws light on the apparent inconsistency that has troubled some editors between lines 1087 and 1099 in Book X and the first line of Book XI. The traditional defence put forward by commentators such as Pearce and Greenwood, and repeated here by Fowler, is that when Milton says Adam and Eve "in lowliest plight repentant *stood*" (XI.1, my italics), "there is no literal contradiction of 'prostrate' at X.1099, since *stood* means 'remained' ". However, their clearly physical prostration at X.1087 and 1099 exerts pressure on *stood*, encouraging us to take it literally. It seems more likely then that Milton intends to show that physical prostration has been replaced by "manly erectness,"⁵⁵ especially since this would continue the parallelism between the scene of Adam's forgiveness of Eve and God's forgiveness of mankind.⁵⁶ Just as Adam raises Eve in token of his reconciliation to her, Milton here effects the quiet miracle of the beginnings of mankind's regeneration after the Fall as Man is held erect once more by God.

The emblematic image of the plant and its support thus becomes invested with theological significance as it merges with the traditional Christian emblem of God, the prop of the fallen, as the Father holds out the promise that mankind "yet once more . . . shall stand," "Upheld by me" (III.178):

By me upheld, that he may know how frail⁵⁷
 His fall'n condition is, and to me ow
 All his deliv'rance, and to none but me.

The emphatic antimetabole underlines the strength of God's support, Man's dependence, and the new conditions that obtain in the fallen world where Man is no longer sufficient to stand alone but must "on him sole depend" (XII.564). In this way, the connotative value of the Ovidian image of the "vine-prop elm" expands and deepens in association with, and is finally absorbed into, Christian truth. Indeed, mankind is instructed in the *Schola Cordis*:

Thou cans't not stand
Without a prop to boulder thee.
To trust to thine owne strength would soon betray thee.

(Christopher Harvey, Emblem 37)

So too the figure of the vine and her elm will finally find fulfilment in the Son himself: through his incarnation he will combine the qualities of the fruitful vine and the supportive elm. In Christ's own metaphorical conceit, he identifies himself as the "true vine", his Father, the vine-dresser, and the branches regenerate mankind who are engrafted⁵⁸ in him:

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit he purgeth [prunes] it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

(John XV.1, 2-6)

The branches depend upon the vine as their means of support and sustenance without which they would wither and die. Their capacity to bear fruit is also dependant upon their connection to the vine and also upon the vine-dresser, who tends to the branches, cutting away the deadwood and pruning the healthy branches to ensure they produce more fruit. Milton's use of the figure of the vine and the elm is of pivotal significance: it looks to classical texts as well as to sacred scripture; it anticipates the Fall, as well as the means to mankind's regeneration. Although the elm's "barren leaves"⁵⁹ may prefigure the "fruitless hours" (IX.1188) that Adam and Eve spend apart after the Fall, in leading the vine to wed her elm Milton prepares for Adam and Eve's reconciliation and the continuation of the human race through their children,⁶⁰ while the fruitful vine looks forward to their eventual redemption through the "the seed of Woman" (XII.379) in Christ who will be the "true vine".⁶¹

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

¹ Though Sylvester's Eve is not assigned a role in the garden before the Fall, Sylvester does anticipate Milton by insisting that Adam's life in Eden, though "voyd of painfull labour," was not idle (*Du Bartas*, II.i.1.310). Yet in spite of such assurances, Sylvester's Adam is never actually shown engaged in any gardening pursuits. Indeed it is "God himselfe (as Gardner)" who is imagined taking part in a range of gardening activities: "He plants, he proins, he pares, he trimmeth round / Th'ever green beauties of a fruitfull ground" (II.i.1.82, 86-87).

² McColley has drawn attention to the way, "Milton's Eve is distinguished from all other Eves by the fact that she takes her work seriously" (1983, 110). It is very telling that on hearing the news of their exile from the garden, Adam laments the loss of places where he had conversed with God, Eve laments not her former existence *per se*, but, as Hiltner aptly notes, "her existence as a *genius loci*" (76).

³ In *The Georgic Revolution* Anthony Low singled out an insistence upon the dignity of manual labour as an unusual feature of pre-lapsarian existence in Milton's Paradise.

⁴ See, for example, Lewalski (1969).

⁵ This is not Brown's impression, however; she feels that: "both Eve and Pomona, despite the former's protestations that she is overtasked, have to look hard to find any real work to do in their gardens, and have plenty of time to attend to the intricate niceties of their craft" (112).

⁶ Although Eve is found to be "more lovely fair" than the "Wood-Nymph" Pomona (V.377-81), she is, nevertheless, most like her: "To . . . *Pomona* . . . / Likest she seemd" (IX.393-94).

⁷ I am extending an interesting observation by Norford that "woman is at once greater and lesser, stronger and weaker, than man" (1978, 3).

⁸ Elsewhere, as we have seen, Milton had glossed St Paul's words in a way that clearly anticipate the wording of the present passage (*Tetrachordon*; Col. 4.76).

⁹ See William and Malleville Haller, 235-72; Haller, 296, 312; Sinfield, 49-70.

¹⁰ See Peter Demetz's short but thought-provoking article. In a more recent study Sammons has carefully analyzed how the classical images of "a vine curling around an elm" and an "ivy clinging to a tree . . . coalesce to suggest both the special nature of prelapsarian marriage and the possibility of Adam and Eve's sinning" (117).

¹¹ See L. D. Lerner, 305.

¹² Although Shalha Anand emphasizes "the emblematic character of many pictures in *Paradise Lost*" (21), she makes no mention of the vine-elm figure.

¹³ Frye has observed that, "rather general associations of the feminine vine with the masculine tree had been directly connected, in the visual arts, with the story of the first parents long before Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*" (247). See too Giamatti, 323.

¹⁴ See Kester Svendsen, 133.

¹⁵ Halkett emphasizes, "the association of the 'female' vine with dependence and submission on the one hand, and with the idea of frailty requiring gentleness of treatment on the other" (104).

Karl P. Wentersdorf discovered in Milton's conception of the garden in *Paradise Lost* a straightforward contrast between the "trees -- stately and strong and thus images of masculinity" and the flowers, "beautiful and frail, and thus an embodiment of the feminine principle" (134). But Milton's complex use of the vine-elm topos exposes this countering of masculine (strong) with feminine (weak) as an evident oversimplification.

¹⁶ See Joseph Summers, 84.

¹⁷ This episode, one of the longer tales in the poem (150 lines), is a story of Ovid's own devising and features Pomona's first appearance in a literary context. Vertumnus, on the other hand, is the subject of an elegy by Propertius (IV.2). It seems likely that Ovid happened upon a reference to Pomona when researching Italian legends for the *Fasti*. See S. K. Myers, 245.

¹⁸ Like Pomona, the name Vertumnus is etymologically suggestive. Myers has helpfully detailed the three etymologies offered for his name by the god in Propertius' poem: "(1) from his turning back of the flood waters of the Tiber (4.2.10 *Vertumnus verso dicor ab amne deus*), (2) from the offerings of the first-fruits of the 'turning' year (4.2. 11 *quia vertentis fructum praecepimus anni*), and (3) from his ability to turn himself into many forms (4.2.47 *quod formas unus vertebar in omnes*)" (235). In the *Metamorphoses* and *Paradise Lost* it is the last two suggested etymologies that are exploited by Ovid and Milton respectively.

¹⁹ Nevertheless, Vertumnus and Pomona are not paired together elsewhere in Latin literature.

²⁰ See Boyette, 28. On this point, see also A. G. George, 65-74.

²¹ In God's commandments to the couple "To Till [the Garden] and keep" it (VIII.320), and to "Be fruitful, multiply" (VII.396), "Propagation is what is urged," following His own "prolific example" (Le Comte, 87). Critics have often commented upon the pre-eminent importance assigned to the creative process by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. Indeed Rajan concluded that for Milton "goodness is fertility" (1965, 3), while Le Comte enthusiastically declared the poem to be "a hymn to creation" (85).

²² For a different view, see McColley (1983), 81.

²³ The abundant growth of the vine is singled out for mention again in Raphael's account of creation: "Forth flourish't thick the clustring Vine" (VII.320).

²⁴ In an influential essay, Hugh Parry observed how often in Ovid the sun is “a masculine symbol of unbridled, primitive energy” (277). An example of the sun as a symbol of sexual potency is to be found in the description of the scene of Proserpina’s abduction (Met. V.388-89). The shady spot may seem to offer protection against the sun, but, as Stephen Hinds has pointed out, the expression used to denote the sun’s rays, *Phoebeos . . . ictus*, contains an image of “striking” associated with the arrows of Phoebus, and so the particular phrasing foreshadows the sexual violence that is to follow here (31-32), especially since *ictus* could also be used of male ejaculation (see Charles Segal, 1969, 54). Milton plays out this possibility here (V.300-2), where the shooting of the sun’s rays is expressly envisaged as an act of sexual penetration. Note too, Earth’s explicitly sexual invitation to the Sun in *Elegia quinta* (93-95).

²⁵ See too, Demetrakopoulos, 103.

²⁶ One of the most striking examples of this tendency occurs at the start of Raphael’s visit when, as Lewis duly noted, “The angel hails [Eve] more ceremoniously than Adam” (121). D. F. Rauber pointed out that while Eve is regularly likened to a Roman fertility goddess, Adam is rarely assigned a mythical role (60). See also Hutcherson (1960), 16. In spite of the finely detailed process of association by which Milton identifies Eve with Pomona, at no point does Milton link Adam with Vertumnus. DuRocher posits that this is “perhaps because the god’s shiftiness is inappropriate to Adam’s stable character” (98), but another explanation may also offer itself (see Chapter 6).

²⁷ The *genius loci* is a feature of Milton’s early works: *Christ’s Nativity* (186); *Il Penseroso* (154); *Arcades* (26ff) and *Lycidas* (183). Knott made the connection between Eve and such tutelary divinities (114), and McColley was the first to remark on the similarity between the

genius loci in *Arcades* and Eve (1983, 126). For a more expansive exploration of this aspect of Eve's role in Eden, see Hiltner's essay.

²⁸ Friedman draws a distinction between the types of authority vested in Adam and Eve respectively: "Genesis gave [Milton] the myth of Adam's naming of the beasts as a sign of sovereignty; Milton gives Eve the authority to name the flowers, as another instance of the way in which 'true authority in men' may nevertheless be 'not equal' (IV.295-96) though evidently sovereign" (126). There are, of course, no flowers to name in the Biblical Eden.

²⁹ This emerges more clearly still in the gardening debate, see 000-00.

³⁰ Eve's departure can be read as an implicit criticism of Adam's abstract intellectualizing brought out by the horticultural pun in "abstruse." If we dig down to the Latin roots of the word *abs trudere* (*abs*, away from; *trudere*, to thrust, push forth, especially of plant growth), its usage seems to intimate the misdirection of Adam's creative energies here.

³¹ The landscape in Pomona's garden is emphatically *cultus*; Ovid affirms: *qua nulla Latinas / inter hamadryadas coluit sollertius hortos* ("amongst the Latin wood-nymphs none was more skilful at cultivating gardens," *Met.* XIV.623-24), and, a few lines later, refers to her *cultos* . . . *hortos* ("well-tended gardens," *Met.* XIV.656).

³² This seems in deliberate contrast to "all kinds of sweet all-coloured roses" in Sylvester's Eden which are disposed "In true love-knots, tri-angles lozenges" of so intricate a design that "(one would think) the Angels daily dresse" them (*Du Bartas*, II.i.1.513-15).

³³ The competitive relationship between Nature and Art is a recurrent preoccupation of the *Metamorphoses*. As Feldherr has observed: "Throughout the work, art and nature are notoriously unstable categories: elements of the natural world seem to aspire to the perfection and order of

art, but the ultimate manifestation of artistic excellence is the illusion of reality” (176).

Nevertheless, Nature may imitate and improve upon Art as in the case of Diana’s grotto, *arte laboratum nulla: simulaverat artem / ingenio natura suo* (“not fashioned by art, but Nature imitated art using her own natural gifts,” *Met.* III.158-59), and vice versa, as when Pygmalion *niveum mira feliciter arte / sculpsit ebur formamque dedit, qua femina nasci / nulla potest* (“with breath-taking art successfully carved a figure out of snowy ivory, and gave it a beauty more perfect than that of any woman ever born,” *Met.* X.247-49).

³⁴ Compare the sexually predatory embrace of Salmacis: *Ut . . . solent hederæ longos intexere truncos* (“as ivy is accustomed to wrap itself around tall tree trunks,” *Met.* IV.365).

³⁵ Frye also notes a similarly disturbing ambivalence in treatments of the vine motif in the Medici tapestries and in the “Creation of Eve” by Andrea Pisano (147-48). See too Giamatti, 324 and Le Comte, 7. See also Ricks’ discussion of the significance of Eve’s “wanton ringlets” and “the ‘wantonness’ of Eden” (112). (But note also Fish’s view of the reader’s interpretative dilemma here, 92-103.)

³⁶ Eve also resembles the untended vine in needing someone to “check” her “fruitless embraces.” This is made clear at IV.477-80, when she turns *back* from Adam to the “smooth watery image” in the pool (Evans, 253).

³⁷ See especially, Nicholas J. Jones, but also Ricks’ discussion of the significance of “redress” at IX.219 (146) and Sammons’ comments (122).

³⁸ See Murray W. Bundy, 159, and Norford, (1975, 26-27).

³⁹ Noting how the projected evolution of mankind is figured by the divine spokesman Raphael as the growth of a plant which, rooted securely in the earth, finally flowers and fruits as spirit,

Hiltner argues that Eve's Fall comes about because she tries to uproot herself and pull free of the earth in an attempt to anticipate this gradual ripening process. On both occasions, Eve's "fall" can thus be viewed as a "failed ascension," to use Hiltner's apt phrase (70-73).

⁴⁰ For a different reading of both episodes, see Fish, 217-25 and McColley (1978), 25-46.

⁴¹ In Sermon 17, Donne revealed a very strong sense of a woman's inferiority and was intent upon bringing woman "to that just estimation of her self, *That she will be content to learn in silence with all subjection . . . that she is . . . but a Help: and no body values his staffe, as he does his legges.*"

⁴² This is the very accusation that, after the event, Eve will ironically level against Adam. Now taking as self-evident her insufficiency without him, she demands: "Being as I am why didst not thou the Head / Command me absolutely not to go" (IX.1155-56).

⁴³ James Brown notes how the "series of muted ambiguities" that "precede the pun on 'embraces' has the effect "that 'trees' or 'boughes' acceptably possess the mobility, the motivation, the moral responsibility of sexually driven creatures; Adam and Eve . . . have become guardians of morality in a world ominously prefiguring their own weaknesses" (16-17).

⁴⁴ As Newton explains, "the propriety of this expression will best be seen by what Junius says of the etymology of the word *pamper*. The French word *pampre*, of the Latin *pampinus*, is a vine-branch full of leaves: and *pamprer*, he says, is a vineyard overgrown with superfluous leaves and branches"; Fowler also comments on this secondary play first noted by Newton.

⁴⁵ See Lewalski, (1969) 86-117 and (1974) 7, where she draws out still further the implications of the correspondence between the growth of the external garden and the maintenance of the

“paradise within” (XII.586) to demonstrate that Milton did not conceive of prelapsarian life as an easy and effortless state of frozen perfection.

⁴⁶ Compare Jane’s comforting words to Rochester: “Plants will . . . take delight in your bountiful shadow; and as they grow they will lean towards you, and wind round you, because your strength offers them so safe a prop” (Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, Chapter 37).

⁴⁷ Lewalski has suggested how Adam might have resolved the dispute (1974, 13). Rogers had given similar advice to the husband in difficulty “not to insult, threaten, and domineer over her as a Lord . . . but by all loving waies tenderly to draw her, and to convince her by the strength of reason” (265). See also Sammons’s contribution to the gardening debate, 122-24.

⁴⁸ DuRocher considers another aspect of the ironic significance of this comparison: since Pomona did not in fact fly from Vertumnus’ attentions in Ovid’s account, he concludes that: “If Eve, like Pomona, is fleeing her lover unwisely, then the result may be the sterility of which Vertumnus warned” (98). For further possibilities, see Chapter 6.

⁴⁹ Sandys’ translation seems particularly apt at this point; Brown has noted how Sandys’ phrasing “seems to be echoed” at IX.208-10 and V.212-15 (112).

⁵⁰ As Revard has pointed out, “the notion of the human being as incomplete is not first noted by Eve, but by Adam” (1973, 74). See Norford, (1978, 12), and Rauber’s comments on IX.309-17 (68-69). Critical contention has tended to centre upon the question of Eve’s sufficiency without Adam, attributing more or less significance to their separation in Book IX. The controversy continues but, as Webber perceptively concluded, “the whole relationship between Adam and Eve, in fact, is affected by this stress between self-sufficiency and mutual need . . . either position, overindulged, becomes destructive, and balance is hard to maintain” (12).

⁵¹ It seems noteworthy that Ovid had contrived a similar effect in the *Metamorphoses*. Pomona's etymologically suggestive name (*poma* [n pl] fruit, fruit from an orchard) encourages the reader to see her as part of the garden that she tends. For further discussion of the implications of this line of interpretation, see Chapter 6.

⁵² Compare Goodman's insistence on a husband's responsibilities to his wife: "Hath God made her the weaker vessel? then she wants the protection of her husband; she the more impotent and weaker of counsel? then she ought to be instructed and taught by her husband" (257). Sammons is less inclined to make excuses for Eve: "Adam is Eve's 'best' prop, not her *only* prop. . . . She was strong enough. She could have withstood the storm. And she can blame only herself for falling" (24).

⁵³ "Eve's 'fall' at Adam's feet begins to restore what was lost in her first fall. Where she had sought superiority and had fallen, here she humbles herself and is subsequently 'upraised.'" (Schofenfeldt, 84).

⁵⁴ Abstract of a paper published in *MQ* 10 (1976), 24, revised and published as "Our General Mother: The Pattern for Mankind".

⁵⁵ Wayne Shumaker, 198. "Prostrate" is generally used of something normally erect as "a tree" or "person" (*OED*), and see XI.758-59, where Adam falls into despair literally and metaphorically "till gently reard / By th' Angel, on [his] feet [he] stood . . . at last".

⁵⁶ See Chapter 7 for a fuller discussion of this point.

⁵⁷ Consider Hume's gloss on "frail," which reads: "How unable to support itself . . . of *fragilis*, Lat. easily broken."

⁵⁸ Milton's discusses this horticultural metaphor in *De Doctrina Christiana* (I.18; Col. 15.366).

⁵⁹ Taken together with the allusion to the *sterilis platanus*, the elm's "barren leaves" may well suggest Christ's cursing of the barren fig tree (Matt. XXI.19). (I am indebted to Anthony Low for this suggestion.)

⁶⁰ Commenting on V.215, John B. Broadbent observes that by "leading 'the Vine to wed her Elm' it is as if Adam and Eve were rearing children and giving them in marriage" (177).

⁶¹ Frye remarks that in one tradition of Judaic and primitive Christian art the vine was associated with the Tree of Life and "the vine and its grapes became symbolic of sacrifice and redemption through Christ" (247). Parallels between Eve and the Son are further developed in Chapter 7.