“Domestick Adam” versus “Adventrous Eve”:
Arguments about Gardening in Milton’s Eden

Rosamund Paice

University of Portsmouth

Abstract: This essay emphasizes the importance of Adam and Eve’s dispute over gardening in accounting for their progression towards the Fall. Reading Adam and Eve’s conversation in book 9 of *Paradise Lost* in the light of husbandry manuals and the companionship ideals embraced by Milton, it argues that both stray from their culturally and textually sanctioned roles. Eve’s rejection of her husband’s society in favor of her plants runs counter to the desired movement of beings up “the scale of Nature” (*Paradise Lost* 5.509), as outlined by the archangel Raphael. Adam, too, chooses wrongly on the morning of the Fall, seeking pleasure and ease in the bower during the hours assigned for garden labor. As faults, Adam and Eve’s misalignments in nature and companionship are temporary and can be put right, but their accumulation makes them susceptible to Satan’s temptation.

Keywords: *Paradise Lost*, gardens, environment, husbandry

[W]e must not omit the famous Mr. *John Milton* one of *Cromwell*’s Secretaries; who, by his excellent and never-to-be-parallel’d Poem of *Paradise Lost*, has particularly distinguish’d *Gard’ning*, by taking that for his Theme; and shews, that tho’ his Eyes depriv’d him of the Benefit of seeing, yet his Mind was wonderfully mov’d with the Philosophy, Innocence, and

Beauty of this Employ, his Books, tho’ mix’d with other Subjects, being a kind of Philosophical Body of *Gard’ning*, as well as Divinity.

Stephen Switzer, *The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener’s Recreation*

A dispute over gardening is central to the story of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, with the demands of the garden being used by Eve in book 9 to trigger a physical separation from Adam. The garden, she contends, is growing so fast that they should “divide [their] labours” (9.214) the more efficiently to undertake their gardening duties.[1] The resulting exchange between the Edenic couple and their subsequent actions reveal misalignments with nature and each other. Eve takes the lead and directs their gardening labor in a way that appeals today but strays beyond the role once assigned to the female gardener. Directing her desires down rather than up “the scale of Nature” (5.509), she gives precedence to her flowers and walks away from marital conversation. In turn, Adam succumbs to an unearned garden leisure in a way that the text positions as unmanly. Adam and Eve’s physical separation on that morning, then, enacts a mental separation and disruption of assigned roles that precedes the Fall, and that goes well beyond questions of gardening. In Milton’s hands, falling is not simply the result of Satan’s temptation, but an accumulation of slippages—here, garden-related—in right thought and action. Each slippage is, as Anthony Low puts it, a “fault (though not yet a sin).”[2] The couple’s faults might have been put right, but their prelapsarian emergence makes both Adam and Eve susceptible to Satan’s temptation.

Modern critics have not gone as far as the English garden designer and writer Stephen Switzer in claiming that Milton placed gardening philosophy on a par with divinity, but they have concurred that gardens and gardening have a central place in *Paradise Lost*. The terms of the discussion, too, have remained remarkably similar.[3] In the 1718 reissue of *The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation*, retitled *Ichnographia Rustica*, Switzer added to his enthusiastic tribute to Milton as a gardening philosopher: "What more beautiful than that where he describes our Primogenial Parents in their untainted State of Innocence; a lively representation of a Vertuous Couple in the sweet Enjoyment of their Garden!"[4] A vision of "untainted . . . Innocence" also underpins Diane Kelsey McColley's description, in *Milton's Eve* (1983), of Milton's Eden as "an organic community of interconnected lives to which their [Adam and Eve's] healthy minds delightedly respond."[5] McColley's study, a rare example of "first wave" early modern ecocriticism, remains a notable authority for later ecocritical explorations of Milton. Her influence pervades Ken Hiltner's *Milton and Ecology* (2003), for example, in which we read of an "Adam and Eve . . . thoroughly rooted in the Earth; understanding their garden place . . . not as dead re-sources to be utilized, but rather as the very *source* which makes life in the Garden possible."[6] Like Switzer's account, such critical perspectives reflect understandings of gardens and gardening whose roots can be found in the rise of the English landscape garden: the assumptions about the relationship between man and nature that they encode postdate Milton.

Eve's superior connection with nature is another modern preoccupation. When in 1971 John Knott wrote that Eve "is more sensitive than Adam is to the flowers," and that she "presides over the flowers in the Garden like a goddess whose touch has the power to inspire growth," these were clearly meant as excellent characteristics. For Knott, Eve is "patron and guardian of the flowers of Eden, almost a genius of the place."[7] Hiltner develops this line of thinking into an argument that Eve is the "a 'spirit of place' which guards both the place *and* human beings" until tempted by Satan "to 'uproot' herself from The Garden."[8] Eve also emerges as an ethically-engaged and ecologically-aware being in McColley's *Milton's Eve*, where she is presented as attempting to balance her relationship with Adam with her “responsibilities to other beings.”[9] By the time McColley wrote *Poetry and Ecology* (2007), she could read Eve’s “daily attention to the nursery” as calling her “perilously away from Adam on the morning of the Fall” but as “exemplary” in itself because McColley’s ecocritical reading makes central the tending of plants.[10] Developing from this tradition, Karen Edwards (1999) pictures Milton’s Eve as a “budding natural philosopher,” an ecofeminist with “the instincts of a Boylian witness.” Challenging Stanley Fish’s view of Eve as too dependent on “experience (things seen)” over the unseen truth of God, Edwards argues instead that “Eve does not assign *enough* value to her experience”: “Had she properly valued her own experience of the natural world, she would not have been led astray by the marvellous talking serpent.”[11]

In “Ecocriticism and Vitalism in *Paradise Lost*” (2015), Leah Marcus challenges “presentist” ecocriticism that downplays historical understandings of nature. With a dash of caricature, she observes that the popularity of ecocritical approaches has led to Milton’s Eve being “characterized as proto-ecologist and Milton himself [being] hailed as a precursor of modern environmentalism and its solicitude for the wellbeing for Gaia, Mother Earth.”[12] Such readings, she argues, sit uneasily with the historical tradition (exemplified by Keith Thomas’s *Man and the Natural World*) that describes a shift in the early modern period “from the position that God created all things for human use to a greater emphasis on human stewardship and responsibility for the natural world.” Seeking a middle ground between ecocritical presentism and historicism, Marcus contends that Milton’s vitalism does not just account for the way in which he describes “the human race’s wrenching alienation from earth, but also proposes a trajectory for reclamation that is quite compatible with modern efforts to decrease pollution though it operates by radically different and (to us) impossibly utopian means.” Her focus, however, remains on the effect of the Fall on humanity's relationship with nature—"alienation from earth" precipitated by eating the forbidden fruit—whereas my interest is in the build-up to the Fall.[13] Moreover, the "nature" Marcus is concerned with is the whole of physical creation, while my focus is on Adam and Eve's relationship to the elements of nature with which they come into direct contact in Eden. There, following the injunctions of Genesis 2:15 and 1:28, the grounds are something that they are tasked not only to "till and keep" (8.320) but also to "Subdue" (7.532)—a construction that is less congruent with modern ecological awareness.[14]

As is the way with caricatures, Marcus's account of ecocriticism was not altogether fair. Published earlier than Marcus's essay, Jennifer Munroe's ecofeminist "First 'Mother of Science'" had already tackled some of what Marcus claimed was missing from the field. Indeed, both Marcus and Edwards represent a broader ecocritical approach of the kind envisaged by Kathleen Wallace and Karla Armbruster in *Beyond Nature Writing* (2001), exploring "the role of nature in texts concerned with human cultures, . . . [and] the role of culture in nature."[15] Monroe, like Marcus, recognizes that Milton's Eden abides by the hierarchies (earthly, celestial, and gendered) of early modern England. In particular, Monroe locates *Paradise Lost* within the tradition of male scientific discourse in the seventeenth century that trivialized "Ladies chemistry" despite the contributions of women's writings on "cooking and household medicine, . . . chemistry, botany, and anatomy." Where Edwards's ecofeminist Eve should have trusted more to her experience, Monroe's Eve is "simply too close to nature to be able to assess it objectively and, therefore, effectively." Rather than casting Eve as superior, Monroe argues, Milton's connection of Eve "to the natural world emphasizes her potential for unruliness in ways that resemble Eden's potential for the same." Thus, when Raphael warns Adam against overvaluing Eve's faculties, it is a warning to readers, too: "she, like Nature, must be domesticated by

Adam's ready and more capable hand." Eve, Monroe asserts, is certainly in tune with modern ecofeminism, but that alignment is at odds with the ideological position of Milton's text: "*Paradise Lost* depicts how Eve's brand of ecofeminism is destructive both to the human and nonhuman worlds alike," thereby underscoring "contemporary arguments about why women must be subject both to men and the natural world."[16]

This study engages with Adam and Eve's relation to nature in Eden in the context of early modern hierarchies, but it rejects the premise that Adam is consistently superior in his gardening alignments. Indeed, it rejects the construction—implicit in much ecocriticism—of Adam and Eve as uniform in their respective prelapsarian approaches to the natural world. Even Monroe implies this when she describes Eve as seeming "naturally inclined not to interpret well" and Adam as seeming to have "an innate ability to interpret with great accuracy the inner workings of creation."[17] Adam and Eve, I contend, shift significantly in their relationship with nature from an initial stance approved by the text. By situating their discussions of their gardening duties in the context of gardening manuals, spiritual accounts, and the companionship ideals embraced by Milton, I reveal a text imbued with contemporary understandings of the roles of men and women in relation to nature management. It is also, however, a text in which ideals give way to increasingly questionable actions. In particular, by problematizing both Eve's argument for physical separation based on gardening duties and Adam's unproductive garden leisure, I argue that Milton, though not ecologically minded in contemporary terms, does invite his readers to consider the ways in which nature is appropriated by human beings—for example, as a space of retreat from the human, with or without connection to the spiritual.

I also challenge the prevalent notion of an "original," ideal nature—McColley's "organic community of interconnected lives"—that is threatened only by outside agency. Miltonic nature has a significant and ordained susceptibility to wantonness. Francis Bacon famously opened his essay “Of Gardens” with the statement: “God Almighty first planted a garden. And, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasure. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man, without which, buildings and palaces are but gross handiworks.”[18] Early modern gardening manuals often follow the Baconian line. William Lawson, for example, writes that “When God had made man after his owne Image, in a perfect state, and would haue him to represent himselfe in authority, tranquilitie, & pleasure vpon the earth, he placed him in Paradise. What was Paradise? but a Garden and Orchard of trees and hearbs, full of all pleasure: & nothing there but delights.”[19] Milton’s God, however, does not place Adam and Eve in a garden *only* of human pleasure and refreshment. The “Eternal Spring” (4.268) of Eden is distinct in a crucial detail from the *ver perpetuum* of Alcinous’ palace. In the latter, Homer describes a space in which trees bear fruit throughout the year and that fruit never rots.[20] By contrast, Milton’s God, the “sovran Planter” (4.691), gives his humans a garden that requires tending—a garden in which “wanton growth” leads to “Blossoms . . . and those dropping Gumms” lying “bestrowne unsightly and unsmooth” (4.629–31).

This is a space of georgic labor. As Low has shown, Milton follows the Judaic and Christian scholars through whom “the classical Roman ‘gospel of work’ entered biblical exegesis to join traditional Jewish respect for labor.” This tradition overwrote the seeming pessimism of the curse of labor found at Genesis 3:19: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” Low presents as an example Origen, who argues as Virgil does that God “impos[ed] on man want and the need to work for food and shelter” in order that humanity’s understanding should be exercised and so to encourage human invention: thus, labor that “had seemed at first to be an evil . . . may thus be seen from another perspective to be a significant good.”[21] As Milton presents it in Prolusion 6, such labor must be balanced with leisure: their "alternation . . . is wont to banish the weariness of satiety and to bring it to pass that things neglected for a while are taken up again more eagerly."[22] Balance, indeed, is key: the danger is always that one will slip from the earned *otium* of positive leisure that supplies a space for the development of intellectual and spiritual gifts to the *otium* of idleness that encourages vice and indolence. This essay goes further than Low in challenging Adam's understanding of leisure, pointing to his prelapsarian slippage into moments of indolence. It is not simply that "Milton's addition of a georgic element to the usual prelapsarian pastoral . . . diminishes the distance between Eden and what fallen humanity may still hope to attain."[23] Prelapsarian Adam and Eve are also made identifiable to fallen humans because they are not remote in perfection; the blame for their Fall does not lie beyond them in abstract evil. Adam and Eve are recognizable in their struggle to maintain the ideal balance; they are susceptible, through free will, to acting wrongly before they sin.

Consideration of the relationship between the Garden of Eden and the humans who occupy and tend it, though, requires thinking beyond "nature" to gardens as spaces of nature management and cultivation. This involves appreciating particular kinds of gardens as particular kinds of places and the alignments of the human activities that have taken place within them. Adam and Eve's "happy rural seat" is clearly more country estate than cottage garden, with its "Groves [of] rich Trees," "Lawns, or level Downs, and Flocks," its valleys full of flowers, its "umbrageous Grots and Caves," and its lake (4.247–261). The more substantial gardens and estates of Milton's day comprised different zones, some closer to the house and more domesticated, some further from the house and more natural—though still cultivated—and some designed to be "Tending to wilde" (9.212).[24] The zones closest to the house included kitchen gardens, decorative parlor gardens, and architectural elements that encouraged easy conversation—bowers and, on larger estates, colonnades, for example.[25] Those further from the house might serve very different purposes—perhaps as secluded retreats from conversation, or as spaces for crop cultivation, or as a mixture of the two, as in the case of orchards. Moreover, from the early seventeenth century, husbandry manuals (aimed particularly at the landed gentry) aligned these different zones with distinctly gendered activities.[26] As Munroe has demonstrated, from the early seventeenth century "the gendering of gardens and garden discourse . . . generally cast men as superior in intellect and talent as the 'real' gardeners, while women were constructed as amateurs in need of special guidance."[27] Men were rated as professionals in the garden, associated with architectural and profit-making activities and plants whose cultivation was more physically taxing and required "manly" skill. They were associated with the "outward parts of husbandrie," work that, as the voluminous Gervase Markham put it in his *Country Contentments* (1623), was undertaken "euer for the most part abroad, or remoued from the house, as in the field or yarde."[28]

The orchard holds a special place in such descriptions. It is figured as a space ordained by God for both labor and refreshment, and thus the work that takes place within it is framed as providing a special connection to God. Orchard work is serious work, and serious work is to be undertaken by men. Thus, when Lawson describes the labor required to create a "pleasant, and profitable Orchard," the qualities he lists are once again those commonly gendered as male in early modern culture: such a gardener must be "a Fruiterer, religious, honest, skilfull in that faculty, and therewithall painfull." The orchard gardener "had not need be an idle, or lazie Lubber, for so your Orchard being a matter of such moment, will not prosper."[29]

Although by the seventeenth century there were recognized examples of aristocratic women gardeners across the early modern period—Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford (1580–

1627), and Mary Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort (1630–1715), for instance—the value of women's gardening, as Monroe observes, "stood in tension with the gardening associated with their male counterparts."[30] Such gardening women may have "confronted their culture's assumptions about class and gender," as Stephen Bending contends, but they did not overthrow them.[31] In the general view, appropriate gardening for women was associated with littleness of scale and purpose, beauty, pleasure, and even frivolity. Kitchen and decorative gardening were the domains traditionally assigned to women, and "by the mid-seventeenth century . . . garden manuals betrayed a sense that flower gardening was a particularly feminine activity."[32] The role of the housewife was to use her domestic skills and kitchen garden "to adorne and beautifie her table" for the enjoyment of her family and guests.[33] These limited gardening duties could be performed "with small labour, the compasse of a Garden beeing nothing so great, as of an Orchard," in areas close to the house, contained, and deemed safer (or perhaps just more easily watched).[34] Charles Evelyn confirms the persistence of this construction into the eighteenth century: "the Management of the Flower-Garden in particular, is oftentimes the Diversion of the Ladies, where the Gardens are not very extensive, and the Inspection thereof doth not take up too much of their Time."[35]

Prior to the morning of the Fall, Milton's Adam and Eve garden together according to these gendered alignments. Adam directs their gardening ("With first approach of light, we must be ris'n") and Eve "Unargu'd . . . obey[s]" (4.624, 636). Indeed, as Amy Tigner notes, by book 5 "food preparation appears to be a considerable part of Eve's specific labor: Eve works in her garden, and then she prepares dinner." What this shows, though, is not (as Tigner would have it) Eve's "intellectual mastery of the culinary possibilities of her garden that is distinctly outside patriarchal purview."[36] Rather, Eve's excellence in matters domestic prior to the morning of the

Fall positions her within the ideal of womanhood espoused by the patriarchal purview of seventeenth-century England. Adam, too, evidently has such gendered alignments in view when he pronounces that “nothing lovelier can be found / In Woman, then to studie household good, / And good workes in her Husband to promote” (9.232–34).

These alignments, however, give way on the day of the Fall. That morning, Eve makes the case for attending to gardening duties separately, no longer under Adam’s supervision. Instead, she puts forward her own gardening plan:

Adam, well may we labour still to dress
This Garden, still to tend Plant, Herb and Flour,
Our pleasant task enjoyn’d, but till more hands
Aid us, the work under our labour grows,
Luxurious by restraint; what we by day
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
One night or two with wanton growth derides
Tending to wilde. 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 round this Arbour, or direct
The clasping Ivie where to climb, while I
In yonder Spring of Roses intermixt
With Myrtle, find what to redress till Noon. (9.205–19)

Adam promptly corrects his wife: “These paths & Bowers doubt not but our joynt hands / Will keep from Wilderness with ease, as wide / As we need walk, till younger hands ere long / Assist us” (9.244–47). This exchange, crucially, is a Miltonic invention: as Jude Welburn notes, “in no earlier account was this division ever instigated by Eve, and it certainly was not presented as a means of improving their productivity.”[37] The disagreement, then, seems designed to jump out at readers as new information, and so encourage consideration of the merits of Adam and Eve’s opposed views on the gardening needs of Eden.

Eve’s view that the garden requires more sustained tending is not unique in *Paradise Lost*. What Seth Lobis describes as “a georgic ethic of care and stewardship” is, at least for a while, shared by Adam.[38] In book 4, it is Adam who makes this case:

To morrow ere fresh Morning streak the East
With first approach of light, we must be ris’n,
And at our pleasant labour, to reform
Yon flourie Arbors, yonder Allies green,
Our walk at noon, with branches overgrown,
That mock our scant manuring, and require
More hands then ours to lop thir wanton growth:
Those Blossoms also, and those dropping Gumms,
That lie bestrowne unsightly and unsmooth,
Ask riddance, if we mean to tread with ease. (4.623–32)[39]

This view is also shared by Milton as narrator, who, only a few lines before Eve makes her case to Adam on the morning of the Fall, reveals: “much thir work outgrew / The hands dispatch of two Gardning so wide” (9.202–203). Eve’s basic understanding of the growth of Eden, then, is right, which leaves the questions of whether she has a proper understanding of what level of gardening is required in response, whether her understanding of the urgency of the task is proportionate, and whether this constitutes a legitimate reason for separation.

Knott, who claims that “Milton to give Eve a special role as what amounts to master gardener,” nevertheless takes issue with her statement of the necessity to “Lop overgrown, or prune”:

> By pruning “overwoody” trees and training grape vines on elms, Adam and Eve may increase the productivity of the Garden in a limited way, but it is hard to see this as more than a token effort. In a world in which Eve can choose from among “fruit of all kinds” (5.341) and is conscious of such abundance that “untoucht” fruit must await future hands (9.620–23), it makes little sense to worry about productivity.[40]

However good a gardener Eve is, in Knott’s view Adam has the superior understanding on this point: in the prelapsarian garden, there is no need for a profit-making garden, so no compulsion to garden beyond what is required for subsistence. Yet, as Andrew McRae points out, “In traditional usage the word ‘profit’ meant a general advantage or benefit (*OED*, 1a, 2a)”; it is only “in a specifically agrarian sense [that] it might be equated with the gross yield from a harvest.”[41] William Lawson’s *New Orchard and Garden* (1618) also makes clear that pruning was understood in this vein by those knowledgeable about gardening in Milton’s day, as it is now: it is not just a mechanism by which to increase productivity, but is crucial to ensuring plant health. "It is a common and unskilfull opinion, and saying," writes Lawson, "Let all grow, and they will beare more fruit: and if you lop away superfluous boughes, they say, what a pitty is this? How many apples would these have borne? not considering there may arise hurt to your Orchard, aswel (nay rather) by abundance, as by want of wood."[42] In line with this, Milton's narrative in book 5 indicates that pruning and training trees is not merely a matter of increasing the harvest, but is of a moral and spiritual benefit. The trees' overgrowth (expressed as overreaching) is couched as an alternative and illegitimate type of sexual union ("fruitless imbraces" and "barren leaves") that Adam and Eve must check or lead to "marriageable" relations (5.212–19).[43] Trees must be pruned and lopped, just as Eve suggests—a requirement especially significant in a text in which the Fall takes place in an orchard.

For Barbara Lewalski, the need to tame the garden's "wanton growth" renders the charge "to dress it and to keep it" (or "till and keep" it, as Milton translates Genesis 2:15) not simply a "pleasant exercise" or "directive to man to care for his own soul or a promise that God will work in man as in a garden," but a horticultural duty.[44] In fact, though, horticultural duty and the health of the soul were closely aligned in Milton's day. As Thomas observes, it was at this time that "arguments about the perfection of the Creator's design reached their most ingenious and fanciful. . . . [F]rom the mid seventeenth century there was an increasing disposition to play down the Fall and to stress, not the decay of nature, but its benevolent design."[45] Among the "ingenious and fanciful" arguments were those of Henry More in *An Antidote against Atheisme* (1653), in which he sought to explain the importance to God's design of weeds and poisonous plants:

> Nor is it materiall to object that stinking *weeds*, and *poysonous Plants* bear *seed* as well as the most *pleasant* and most *usefull*. For first the Industry of Man is exercised by them to weed them out where they are hurtfull. Which reason if it seem slight, let us consider that if humane Industry had nothing to conflict and struggle with, the fire of mans Spirit would be half extinguish'd in the flesh, and then wee shall acknowledge that that which I have alleged is not so contemptible nor invalid.[46]

There was, explained the likes of More, a benign purpose in the existence of "wanton growth," and a spiritual need to weed, without which man's spirit would slacken. According to this logic—and, indeed, according to God's instruction at Genesis 1:28—Adam and Eve are right and in no way misreading creation when they present the garden's wildness as something that requires correction, and it is important, spiritually, that they respond to this challenge. Milton follows the same logic when, departing from previous descriptions of Eden, he presents his paradisal garden as "overgrown," "wanton," "unsightly," or "unsmooth."[47] It is not simply a case that gardening is necessary for "the preservation of [Eden's] perfection."[48] There is also no need to attempt, as Knott does, to explain away Milton's use of "wild" and "wanton" as non-pejorative.[49] Eden's susceptibility to wantonness is part of its perfection, without which humanity cannot thrive spiritually. Thus, it is hard to see Adam's response to Eve's proposal on the morning of the Fall as a legitimate correction of her faulty understanding. Once again, Eve's diagnosis and the level of urgency she suggests seem appropriate to meet an obligation that is not spiritual *or* horticultural, but spiritual *because* it is horticultural.

This leaves the question of whether Eve's correct understanding of the garden constitutes a valid argument for separating from Adam. McColley has argued that Eve's suggestion of their division of labor is not “a mere whim, a bit of feminine dabbling, or an excuse for willful roving.” For McColley, Eve is a dutiful gardener whose “desire to work for a while in her own way had sprung from a healthy desire to dress the Garden in obedience to the commandment and to preserve the liberty on which their obedience and mutual love depend.”[50] Yet, although Eve’s gardening seriousness may be positive in her virtuous appreciation of the value of lopping and weeding, it becomes a problem when she uses gardening duty as the rationale for separation from her husband.

The exchange in book 4, in which Adam speaks of “wanton growth,” provides an illuminating context in which to consider Eve’s desire for solitary gardening. There, Adam acknowledged the pressing work of the garden during the day but did so as he drew Eve off to the ultimate physical closeness of the nuptial bed: “Mean while, as Nature wills, Night bids us rest” (4.633). Instead of opposing her husband’s conclusions, Eve’s response is a clear statement of her obedience: “My Author and Disposer, what thou bidst / Unargu’d I obey; so God ordains, / God is thy Law, thou mine” (4.635–37). Following that statement—and in a speech whose hyperbole (intemperance, even) moves just as unsettlingly in the opposite direction to her desire to separate on the morning of the Fall—she affirms her commitment to Adam’s will in what amounts almost to a rejection of nature in the absence of human (and specifically marital) presence:

But neither breath of Morn when she ascends
With charm of earliest Birds, nor rising Sun
On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, floure,
Glistring with dew, nor fragrance after showers,

Nor grateful Eevning mild, nor silent Night
With this her solemn Bird, nor walk by Moon,
Or glittering Starr-light without thee is sweet. (9.650–56)

By contrast, in the separation scene of book 9, the demands of nature management are Eve's reason for leaving her husband. Eve's explanation for her suggestion that they "divide their labours" is that she thinks their joint gardening is distracting them from the tasks in hand:

For while so near each other thus all day
Our taske we choose, what wonder if so near
Looks intervene and smiles, or object new
Casual discourse draw on, which intermits
Our dayes work brought to little, though begun
Early, and th' hour of Supper comes unearn'd. (9.220–25)

For Welburn, this is a "rational" argument for a division of labor: Eve seeks "the separation of labor from other, noninstrumental, activity."[51] This, though, is to attend only to the horticultural element of Eve's case and to accept principles of atomized order and productivity.

Adam is quick to spot an undercurrent of something more unsettling in Eve's arguments: "if much converse perhaps / Thee satiate," he concedes, "to short absence I could yield. / For solitude somtimes is best societie. / And short retirement urges sweet returne" (9.247–50). Polite as Eve's explanation may be, it clearly does not escape his notice that it is Eve, not God, who seeks separation: Eve, he senses, is excusing herself from his company because she has had enough of him, at least for now. This conversation, then, indicates that marital relations are not as healthy in Eden as one might expect, even before the Fall. Important, too, is the kind of human interaction from which Eve wishes to separate herself—the "Looks … and smiles" and the "Casual discourse." It can be summed up by the word "conversation" in its dual seventeenth-century sense of general intimacy as well as discourse.[52] Milton advocates precisely this "conversation" in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* as central to the companionate marriage ideal, and God judges conversation as a sound basis for human companionship in book 8 of *Paradise Lost* (438–39)—the book that directly precedes Milton's narrative of the separation and Fall.[53] Nor is this the first occasion on which Eve has excused herself from discursive community in preference for a community of plants: she also leaves Adam and Raphael to converse without her at the dinner table while she goes "forth among her Fruits and Flours" (8.44).

Gardening is, of course, well known as an activity that provides respite from the world, and, by extension, human companionship. In the seventeenth century, however, such respite was largely considered the privilege of men. Over and again, literature and gardening manuals rehearse the assumption that only a man's garden respite constitutes a valid retreat, since it is predicated on manly labor: it is a retreat from the world, from a presupposed life of action. Gendering retreat into the garden through male pronouns and the association of his subject with ownership, Thomas Hill's *Gardeners Labyrinth* (1577) declares that garden "Alleis and walkes" not only allow the owner to "view the prosperitie of his herbes and flowers" but also serve "for the delight and comfort of his wearied mind."[54] Lawson, too, is plainly referring to the male domain when he asks:

> whither doe [people] withdraw themselues from the troublesome affaires of their estate, being tyred with the hearing and iudging of litigious Controuersies? choked (as it were) with the close ayres of their sumptuous buildings, their stomacks cloyed with variety of Banquets, their eares filled and ouerburthened with tedious dicoursings? wither? but into their Orchards? made and prepared, dressed and destinated for that purpose, to renue and refresh their sences, and to call home their ouer-wearied spirits.[55]

This alignment persisted throughout the seventeenth century, and well beyond. For example, in *The Lady's Recreation* (1717), Charles Evelyn states confidently that "the curious Part of *Gardening* in general, has been always an Amusement chosen by the greatest of Men, for the unbending of their Thoughts, and to retire from the World."[56]

Expected to remain at a distance from public life, women were not regarded as requiring the same level of escape from the world. Women, as Rebecca Bushnell observes, were expected to *be* "the flower of nature itself," men to do the actual gardening.[57] Thus, for men, gardening retreat was couched in positive terms, as well-earned, while accounts of women's retirement are all too often troubled by allusions to unhappy marriages and sexual indiscretions.[58] Eve's positioning of herself and Adam in terms of gardening duties, as well as her geographical positioning of herself within the Garden of Eden, then, aligns her as much with the women who entered gardens to escape from their husbands as it does with the serious aristocratic women gardeners whom Monroe describes. This indicates not simply that Eve "puts efficiency before community," as J. B. Broadbent has couched it, or, as Low argues, that Eve "misinterprets the nature of the work she and Adam have to do" in a way that indicates utilitarian thinking.[59] Rather, Eve uses efficiency and utilitarian arguments as excuses to avoid community with Adam.

Since those (notably postlapsarian) arguments were rejected by Milton, Eve's deployment of them serves as an indicator to his readers of the danger they pose to physical and spiritual community. Prelapsarian Eve provides an example of faulty thinking that any seventeenth-century reader might fall into.

Later, after her temptation, Adam chastises his wife as "adventrous *Eve*" (9.921), which fits with her desire to move beyond the domestic realm. Eve's flowers are situated within a garden zone designated as feminine, between the companionable areas close to their bower home and the male zone of the orchard. Yet her use of the word "yonder" troubles the passage in which she makes the case to separate from Adam: "yonder Spring of Roses intermixt / With Myrtle" (9.218–19) is both part of a decorative (and so female-gendered) sphere, and seems to lead away from it, towards the "Wilderness" that Adam wishes to avoid. Specifically, I argue, Eve seeks to separate herself from "Casual discourse" (9.223) with Adam to go off "yonder" where she can work alone. In entering that "yonder" space, Eve positions herself legitimately in a flower garden but also moves toward a private female space that was the subject of suspicion by men during this period. Although many medieval and early modern texts depict women safely enclosed within walled gardens, the eroticism of the enclosed garden in the Song of Solomon (4:12) was a strong influence, and there are many early modern texts that play with its disruptive associations. Whether they celebrate or express concern about garden-sequestered women (innocent or otherwise) who are susceptible to being tempted, spied on, or accosted by ne'er-do-wells, such representations offer repeated instances of actions or conversations—and especially inappropriate sexual liaisons—taking place within "private" garden spaces. Perhaps most famously, in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596), the Bower of Bliss holds all the temptations to idleness and lust that Guyon must resist. Literary fears surrounding women in the garden, moreover, were reflected or replicated in life: Laura Gowing notes that “Witnesses to illicit sex paid a particular attention to the domestic geography of adultery, noting the ways adulterous women violated their husbands’ space with,” amongst other things, “walks together in the garden.”[60] These possibilities are incorporated into *Paradise Lost* in the predatory voyeurism and implicit sexual intrusions of Satan, which parody the romance quest: as Lewalski observes, “he comes not to rescue the virtuous from an immoral and enervating romance garden, but to pollute and destroy.”[61] Through Satan’s intervention, Eve’s own garden adventure quickly leads her from the safety of the flower garden into the even more “yonder” orchard.

McColley defends Eve from the blame so often apportioned her for leaving the dinner-table symposium and separating from Adam by invoking her associations with nature as straightforwardly positive. I of course concur that Milton’s Eden is full of plants both animated by and directly responsive to Eve’s presence—plants that “at her coming sprung / And toucht by her fair tendance gladlier grew” (8.46–47). McColley is right, too, to note that Eve’s naming of the flowers is a direct parallel to Adam’s naming of the creatures.[62] Yet Adam’s subsequent conversation with God is a negotiation of appropriate human companionship. In that conversation Adam makes clear that he does not view the animals he names as fitting companions, for “Among unequals what societie / Can sort, what harmonie or true delight?” (8.383–84). God approves Adam’s reasoning: the fellowship of “the Brute” would be “unmeet” for Adam (9.441–42); for right companionship, he needs an Eve. Eve never goes through the same process.

Nevertheless, Eve is present when Raphael describes “the scale of Nature” (5.509). The angel’s account follows a neoplatonic logic in which beings are “more refin’d, more spiritous, and pure, / As neerer to [God] plac’t or neerer tending” (5.475–76).[63] Although Raphael uses the metaphor of a plant to describe the ascent through the scale (from "root" to "the bright consummate floure [that] / Spirits odorous breathes"), it is his placement of "flours and thir fruit" within the scale itself that reveals his (and Milton's) underlying assumptions about the place assigned to plants in creation (5.479–82). Following Plotinus, Milton situates plants lower down the scale than non-discursive animals, and both are lower than "Discursive" humans and "Intuitive" angels (5.488). While Milton's flowers "by gradual scale sublim'd / To vital Spirits aspire, to animal, / To intellectual," they do not (yet) have the "vital Spirits" to which they aspire (5.482–485). In this scheme, it is right that flowers should raise themselves up at Eve's arrival. For Eve to value community with flowers over community with Adam, however, is not to be in tune with nature (a modern conception) but to move down the vitalist scale. Eve's appropriate companion, according to Milton's telling of it, is Adam, a human, and both should aspire upwards to heavenly companionship. Were Eve's absenting herself from Adam's companionship a matter of spiritual retreat (disconnecting from the human in order better to connect with God) her actions would aspire upwards, but it is clear that Eve directs her desire downwards, temporarily rejecting human society for the society of plants. That plants, in Eve's view, offer a viable form of community does not, in Milton's construction, make that community a legitimate priority over human or heavenly companionship. Where Adam and Eve are described by Gabriel as "planted" by God (4.884) it is not to suggest any sort of proto-ecological consciousness of the place of humans alongside other parts of nature, but rather to suggest that as vegetation is to humans, so humans are to God: all things are not equal. Here I diverge significantly from McColley's contention that *Paradise Lost* debates "the sentience and intelligence of animals and the possibilities of an empathetic but not anthropocentric relation of human to other-than-human beings": Milton, I contend, proffers interspecies possibilities only to shut them down, firmly.[64]

His gardening emphasis suggests that he understood the propensity for some people not just to enjoy a garden, but also to draw on gardening as a means of avoiding appropriate companionship, whether with marital partner or with God.

Eve's preference for plant union over marital union on the morning of the Fall develops into idolatry after she has eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. As Lobis observes, Eve's movement is from loving to worshipping nature: "Instead of obeying and reverencing the 'sovran Planter' . . . through her work in the garden, Eve now [at *PL* 9.795] worships the 'Sovran' plant."[65] Although Eve subsequently transfers her affections back to Adam, this does not solve the problem, since her statement—"thou to mee / Art all things under Heav'n, all places thou" (12.617–18)—repeats her idolatry, even if the subject of it has changed.[66] The respite that gardening provides Eve from her conversation with Adam may be welcome for her, then, but it is deeply suspect in terms of her marriage, her obedience to God, and its effects on creation. She overvalues first plants, then a seeming serpent, and in turn herself, a series of errors that begins with Eve's relation to the forms of nature she sees around her and culminates in the impairment of nature as a whole: book 9 expressly records that, as Eve eats the fruit, "Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat / Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe, / That all was lost" (9.782–84).[67]

Eve's misplaced elevation of her companionship with plants is thrown into high relief after the Fall, in the contrast between her own and Adam's responses to the loss of Eden. It is the potential of the garden as a point of connection with God that Adam assumes and laments in book 11:

> *here* I could frequent,

With worship, *place by place* where he voutsaf'd
Presence Divine, and to my Sons relate;
On *this* Mount he appeerd, under *this* Tree
Stood visible, among *these* Pines his voice
I heard, *here* with him at *this* Fountain talk'd (11.317–22, my emphasis)[68]

Adam's God-focused view of the Garden leads Switzer to remark on his lament's "Manlike Nature, being Reflexions on his Deprivation from the Beatifick Presence of God."[69] Switzer's confidence in Adam's understanding is not entirely justified, however. Certainly, Adam's words are emphatically focused on God's presence in Eden as geographically immediate: as Knott puts it, Adam "never forgets that Eden is the 'Gard'n of God,' although Eve sometimes appears to."[70] Adam's words also reveal just how psychologically "rooted" he is in his location. After they leave Eden, Adam worries, he will no longer know where to find God: "In yonder nether World where shall I seek / His bright appearances, or footstep trace?" (11.328–29). As Knott notes, however, Adam's concern is not endorsed by Milton: the Archangel Michael quickly "counters the literalism of Adam's troubled question, with the assurance that God's 'Omnipresence' fills the earth."[71] "Yet doubt not," Michael says, "but in Vallie and in plaine / God is as here, and will be found alike / Present" (11.349–51): God is not location-bound, Michael stresses. Learning from Michael, Adam leaves Eden knowing that he will still "walk / As in his presence" (12.562–63).[72] By comparison, when Eve says to Adam "with thee to goe, / Is to stay here," she follows the right formula (de-emphasizing the significance of place), but replaces God with Adam (12.615–616).

Nature-based encounters with God were regarded as remnants of the more immediate relationship to God that was present in prelapsarian Eden. In *Silex Scintillans* (1650), Henry Vaughan wrote of these Edenic remnants in his poem “Corruption.” In the fallen world,

The valley, or the mountain
Afforded visits, and still *Paradise* lay
In some green shade, or fountain.
Angels lay *leiger* here; each bush, and cell,
Each oak, and high-way knew them;
Walk but the fields, or sit down at some *well*,
And he was sure to view them. (lines 22–28; Vaughan’s italics)

In the wake of the civil wars and regicide, Vaughan’s speaker struggles to find God: “where art thou now?” he asks; “mad man” does not “Walk . . . the fields,” but “Sits down, and freezeth on” (lines 29–30).[73] Milton’s vision is less bleak than Vaughan’s, whose speaker uses the present tense: he cannot see God in his disrupted world. By contrast, Michael’s response to Adam’s despair relates future possibilities that were known quantities for a seventeenth-century reader. Writing in the late 1650s and early 1660s, Milton could offer his readers an Adam unaware of the tradition of finding God in nature, while also relying on his readers’ awareness of that tradition. Thus, although Adam sees removal from geographical proximity to God as encapsulating his hopeless case, his question—“where shall I seek / His bright appearances, or foot step-trace?”—would have encouraged readers to remember the postlapsarian role of nature in providing opportunities for reconnection with God.

It is in this respect that the garden could be seen as a space for legitimate retreat from human interaction, one that could be approved by seventeenth-century Puritans even as they distrusted the retreat of unearned *otium*: this was the garden as spiritual retreat.[74] By disconnecting from the *human*, one could connect better with *God*, and many of Milton's contemporaries sought communion with God in nature. For example, Erica Longfellow observes that, in her *Report and Plea* (1654), Anna Trapnel's portrayal of her garden "evokes both the garden of Eden where Adam and Eve walked alone with God, and the locked garden used to describe the female speaker in the Song of Songs." Trapnel's garden, as Longfellow notes, "serves as an image of both privileged, Edenic communication with God, and the inviolable privacy of such spiritual communion with a lover." So "delightful" is her "communion in the Garden" that when "asked to rejoin the human conversation, Trapnel is unwilling, "for my communion in the Garden was so delightful to me.'" Her garden is "a place of liberating self-enclosure," in which Trapnel "can escape from human intercourse for personal conversation with God."[75]

This, though, is not the form of retreat with which Eve associates Eden. Although she says that Eden's "happie Walks and Shades" are "Fit haunt of *Gods*" (11.270–71), she does not suggest any instance of it being associated for her with contact with the Father himself. It is her visitation of the *flowers* that she will miss, not God's visitation of *her*. As elsewhere in the poem (for example, 8.46), Eve's plants are characterized as her children: she mourns the loss of the flowers that she "bred up with tender hand / From the first op'ning bud, and gave . . . Names" (11.276–77). While earlier in the poem it is fair to say, as Mandy Green does, that Eve's relationship with these plant-children "gives ample evidence of her fitness as the designated mother of mankind . . . stressing the virtuality of her motherhood," here her dedication to them has become questionable.[76] Eve values her relationship with her plant-children above the other, spiritual opportunities for connection with God that the garden represents. As when she removes herself from the dinner conversation with Raphael, then, Eve's flowers—or at least her attitude to flowers—form a barrier between her and Adam, and between her and deeper communion with God. Moreover, these flowers are only metaphorical children, and by giving them preference over her husband on the morning of the Fall Eve temporarily puts in jeopardy her God-sanctioned destiny to become a mother of humans (5.388–91). This might seem an extreme way of reading Eve's attitude to the garden, but the tension between gardening and God was a recognized one in the seventeenth century: "This day," wrote Lady Margaret Hoby in a diary entry of April 1605, "I bestowed to[o] much time in the Garden, and thereby was worse able to performe speritualI duties."[77] As Knott observes, "One can sympathize with Eve's reaction and still recognize a form of excess and a failure to grasp the fundamental significance of the loss of Eden, from Milton's perspective."[78]

While Eve might be criticized for prefering plant life and wandering off on her own, Adam's gardening priorities on the morning of the Fall are themselves open to question. As Munroe's cataloguing of the aesthetic features found in the gardens of the early modern élite demonstrates, it was not just flowers but many other landscape elements that formed part of or supported the division of aesthetic from *productive* garden spaces: "manicured hedges . . . create[d] boundaries between garden space and the rest of the physical landscape and within these gardens one likely found branches crafted into arbors for banqueting, topiaries that transformed small trees and bushes into geometrical designs, and hand-selected plants artfully shaped into knots, parterres [symmetries], and labyrinths."[79] Although we might think of the cultivation of flowers as the most obvious example of aesthetic gardening, therefore, Adam and

Eve's references to arbors (4.626, 9.216) also evoke the gendered aesthetic garden. To work on such architectural elements of a garden is in line with seventeenth-century constructions of manly activity, but to rest in them during the hours assigned to work is not.

On the evening before Satan's first encroachment into Eve's dream, Adam speaks to her of rising "ere fresh Morning streak the East / With first approach of light," and undertaking "pleasant labour" till "Night bids us rest" (4.623–24, 625, 633). By the morning of the Fall, however, his approach to his gardening duties appears to have undergone a subtle shift, a shift that Eve seems alert to when she says that their levels of labor are leaving "th' hour of Supper . . . unearn'd" (9.225). Instead of encouraging Eve "to reform" with him "*Yon* flourie Arbors, *yonder* Allies green" (4.625–26; my emphasis), Adam seeks to keep her close, within the narrow perimeter of "*These* paths & Bowers" (9.244; my emphasis). Rather than actively pursue his assigned "pleasant labour," he encourages Eve to accept that their work will get done somehow: "These paths & Bowers doubt not but our joynt hands / Will keep from Wilderness with ease, as wide / As we need walk" (9.244–46). He does so, moreover, in the *morning*, a time of day allocated for work not leisure. Thus, while Eve has been criticized for speaking increasingly of labor, the way in which Adam positions himself is equally concerning. His language strays from the idea of earned leisure in an aesthetic garden zone to a garden of unearned ease, a garden suspiciously akin to the leisure gardens that were understood as female spaces and were fundamentally out of kilter with Milton's georgic-inspired worldview.[80] Adam's commitment to the paths and bowers of ease both associates him with leisure and suggests a dereliction of gardening duty.

Had Adam set to work as Eve suggested (even under the condition of separation), the gender roles outlined in gardening manuals of Milton's day would have been maintained.

Instead, while Eve is away, Adam "wove / Of choicest Flours a Garland to adorne / Her Tresses, and her rural labours crown" (9.839–41). The irony is double: Eve is all the while being distracted from her labor by Satan—hardly a deserving "Harvest Queen" (9.842); equally, Adam is idling away the morning hours (associated with labor) in a work of floral (and so feminized) aestheticism. Such activity devalues the roses, since they begin to die as soon as they are picked and are already "faded" before they drop (9.893). The significance of their fading, however, runs deeper: as Edwards notes, "*faded* does not signify primarily loss of color, but rather means what we today signify by the word *wilted*. . . . *Faded* or *withered* were the terms used . . . to describe plants drooping or becoming limp."[81] That limpness echoes the image of Adam's unmanning after he hears from Eve of her "The fatal Trespass." Standing "amaz'd, / Astonied . . . and Blank," Adam is anything but stony: phallically flaccid, his joints are "relax'd" by horror and his "slack hand" lets the garland drop (9.889–93). Milton—the Milton who argued for "manly . . . labours" and wrote that "when people slacken . . . then doe they as much as if they laid downe their necks for some wily Tyrant to get up and ride"—could hardly have been unaware of the implications of this image.[82] The unproductivity of Adam's garland-weaving is twofold: it is frivolous rather than horticulturally responsible, and it indicates an unmanly lack of firmness that leaves him susceptible to Satan's tyranny.

Nor is this the first time in the epic in which Adam has been aligned with the leisurely garden. When Raphael approaches, he "*Adam* discernd, as in the dore he sat / Of his coole Bowre" (5.299–300), while "*Eve* within, due at her hour prepar'd / For dinner savourie fruits, of taste to please / True appetite" (5.303–05). This description also emphasizes the pair's geographical relations. In seventeenth-century gardens of the wealthy, one would expect to find the aesthetic spaces located close to the house, as are "*this* Arbour" and "*These* paths & Bowers."

The narrator's description of the first man as "domestick *Adam*" (9.318) at this specific point in the narrative implies a criticism of him for not asserting his manliness by moving from the domestic zone close to the bower-house into the realm of serious and (spiritually) profitable gardening. As Laura Knoppers observes, this "surprising adjective signals the anomaly of Adam's position": having attempted to restrict Eve to "a newly conceptualized idea of domestic privacy," it is he who remains tied to that concept when Eve leaves his side. [83]

What Adam and Eve actually debate on the morning on the Fall has been variously interpreted. In Teresa Michals' reading, Eve "embodies the urge to 'improvement' that distinguishes emergent capitalism," and Adam represents "the social categories of residual feudalism."[84] For Andrew Mattison, the dispute comes down to a de Manian "disassociation between rhetoric and description," with Adam and Eve both attempting to describe the state of Eden convincingly, but failing rhetorically to persuade each other of their case because rhetoric is "*too late*" for "the garden's sheer speed of growth" that signifies "Eden's basic urgency" (Mattison's emphasis).[85] Welburn, by contrast, argues that "the first rift between Adam and Eve, the cause of their separation," arises from the "unresolved tension between meaningful and necessary labor in a state of paradisial abundance."[86] The gardening alignments of Adam and Eve, however, point rather to an argument about gardening being the cover by which Eve expresses her desire to reach beyond her allocated lot, away from Adam, and by which Adam proffers his opposing desire to remain fully attached to her within an area associated with leisure. Adam and Eve's arguments about gardening play out both anxieties about traditional gendered roles and assumptions about the vulnerability of women, but they are also about a relationship that is already straining under the pressure of different ways of thinking—and not just different ways of thinking about the environment they inhabit. The Eve who sets out on the morning of her fall is already thinking herself beyond the shared marital area, marking both her mental and physical separation from Adam. As gender roles reverse, "domestick *Adam*" vies with "adventrous *Eve.*"

Notably, as Knott observes, in responding to Eve's suggestion that they conduct their gardening duties separately in book 9, Adam "seems less concerned than before about messy paths. His primary object is to keep Eve by his side." Knott's judgement that Adam does this because that is "where he assumes that she belongs" fits with the passage in which Adam states that "nothing lovelier can be found / In Woman, then to studie household good, / And good workes in her Husband to promote" (9.232–34).[87] Adam's response here, though, is hard to disconnect from his earlier statement on work and company: "let us ever praise him, and extoll / His bountie, following our delightful task / To prune these growing Plants, and tend these Flours, / Which were it toilsom, yet with thee were sweet" (4.436–39). Despite his declaration about praising God, Adam seems less interested here in maintaining the garden for God's sake and more in using it as a route to companionship with Eve, without whose presence it is "toilsom."

Eve can certainly be blamed for seeking separation from Adam on the morning of the Fall, and her companionship with plants does temporarily threaten to disrupt her union with her ordained mate. It is, however, Adam who verges on disrupting companionship in the most serious way in *Paradise Lost*, and he does so through a construction of his position in nature. Adam may eventually understand that through nature more broadly, rather than Eden specifically, one can know God, but his statement on hearing of Eve's transgression shows little evidence of a God-focused existence. He is unable to conceive of an existence in Eden without her: "How can I live without thee, how forgoe / Thy sweet Converse and Love so dearly joyn'd, /

To live again in these wilde Woods forlorn?" (9.908–10). He follows Eve, not God and, having done so, his view of companionship's pleasures shifts dramatically:

O might I here
In solitude live savage, in some glade
Obscur'd, where highest Woods impenetrable
To Starr or Sun-light, spread thir umbrage broad
And brown as Evening: Cover me, ye Pines,
Ye Cedars, with innumerable boughs
Hide me, where I may never see them more. (9.1084–90)

When Knott reads these passages, his focus is on place—the consequences for Eden:

> In the broadest sense Eden ceases to exist from the moment in which it becomes for Adam a place in which to hide. The sudden transformation of the Garden in Adam's mind dramatically reveals how completely his original harmony with his surroundings depended upon harmony with God. As a consequence of his isolation from God, and from Eve, Eden loses its meaning.[88]

As Michael tells Adam, however, "God attributes to place / No sanctitie" (11.836–37): the consequences for Eden's meaning are, in view of this, irrelevant.

More important is the dual pull of the word "savage." Adam may, of course, have in mind an existence as a "noble savage." Although the phrase entered English discourse following the restoration of the Stuarts and was coined by John Dryden in the *Conquest of Granada* (1672), the concept is related to primitivism, which has a much longer history in England.[89] Milton's interest in the "primitive" activities of Adam and Eve, however, does not equate to the idealized European vision of naked "savages" as innocent of sin. Rather, as Broadbent neatly points out, Milton's Edenic couple "are not noble savages, but natural aristocrats."[90] A movement into "solitude . . . savage," then, suggests something dubious rather than noble. As Christopher Koester observes, these lines reject both companionship and a more "contemplative solitude" (a solitude that might be achieved through connection with God in the garden) and present Adam as "momentarily regressing from a fully realized human to a more animalistic state."[91] Such solitude would, in the first instance, undo the partnering that Adam sought in his discussion of companionship with God in book 8:

> Of fellowship I speak
> Such as I seek, fit to participate
> All rational delight, wherein the brute
> Cannot be human consort. (8.389–92)

Moreover, Adam's desire to be unseen by stars and sun suggests the condition of the fallen angels in their place of "utter darkness" (1.72). In combination, these impulses recall Aristotle's warning, succinctly rendered by Bacon: "Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god."[92] Separated from God and Eve, even enclosed by nature, Adam would not be on a trajectory upwards through the chain of being but would sink to its "savage" bottom.

Gardens and gardening in *Paradise Lost* are presented as providing respite—at once welcome and suspect—from sanctioned relationships, with both other humans and God. The epic's characterizations of the garden of Eden, and of human actions and interactions within it, show that this garden space is a means by which Milton highlights the disruptive propensities of Adam and Eve's relationship even before the Fall. Despite Adam's subsequent lament, on the morning of the Fall, neither Adam nor Eve respond to the garden of Eden as a locus of dynamic interaction with God. Both Eve's preference for her plants and her desire to wander beyond female-gendered domestic zones evince a breakdown of divinely ordained union by which she walks away from both Adam and God. Adam's solitude upon Eve's departure is not grasped by him as an opportunity to commune with God; his decision to make a garland exposes his unproductive overvaluing of Eve and thus undervaluing of God. This situates Adam and Eve's argument about gardening—an argument that both is and is not about gardening—as one of the ways in which *Paradise Lost* represents the Fall not as a moment of temptation alone, but as a culmination of a series of mini-falls, all of which might be reversible and so show the very normal contexts in which falls can occur. Gardening is a routine activity; it is also an activity characterized by Milton as fraught, and (dramatically) earth changing. It we are looking for an ecocritically presentist application, it is that Milton encourages us to take our tending of nature seriously, but to resist appropriating nature as an excuse to withdraw from wider responsibilities—an act of retreat that might in turn endanger nature.

NOTES

[1] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston and New York, 1998). All subsequent quotations of Milton's poetry are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.

[2] Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton, 1985), 320.

[3] Stephen Switzer, *The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation* (London, 1715), 39.

[4] Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica; or, The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation,* vol. 1 (London, 1718), 50.

[5] Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana, 1983), 111.

[6] Ken Hiltner, *Milton and Ecology* (Cambridge, 2003), 4. Hiltner can be thought of as a "second-wave" ecocritic. As Greg Garrard has noted, however, "Even the metaphor of first and second wave is considered problematic," and this is particularly the case with "second-wave" ecocriticism. Garrard describes the "second-wave" category as "too diverse and diffuse to summarize . . . but its connections with political environmentalism and ecological science are, on the whole, more complex and ambivalent." Garrard, introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford, 2014), 2, 1. For the "wave" model used to describe the development of ecocriticism, see Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, Mass., Oxford and Victoria, 2005), 17.

[7] John R. Knott, "Milton's Wild Garden," *Studies in Philology* 102, no. 1 (2005): 74; Knott, *Milton's Pastoral Vision* (Chicago, 1971), 114.

[8] Hiltner, *Milton and Ecology*, 36, 46.

[9] McColley, *Milton's Eve*, 25.

[10] McColley, *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell* (Aldershot, 2007), 213.

[11] Karen Edwards, *Milton and the Natural World: Science and Poetry in "Paradise Lost"* (Cambridge, 1999), 21, 36, 33, 39; quoting Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "Paradise Lost"* (1967; Berkeley, 1971), 249.

[12] Leah Marcus, "Ecocriticism and Vitalism in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2015), 96.

[13] Marcus, “Ecocriticism and Vitalism,” 96, 104. See Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (London, 1983), 17. Marcus draws on the vitalist accounts found in Stephen M. Fallon’s *Milton among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (1991) and John Rogers’s *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (London, 1996).

[14] As several critics have noted, Milton’s “till and keep” differs markedly from the King James Bible’s translation, “dress . . . and . . . keep.” See Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, “Innocence and Experience in Milton’s Eden,” in *New Essays on “Paradise Lost,”* ed. Thomas Kranidas, 86–117 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), 90; Knott, “Milton’s Wild Garden,” 74–75; and Teresa Michals, “‘Sweet Gardening Labor’: Merit and Hierarchy in *Paradise Lost*,” *Exemplaria* 7 (1994), 505–06.

[15] Kathleen R. Wallace and Karla Armbruster, ‘Introduction: Why Go Beyond Nature Writing, and Where to?’, in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, edited by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (Charlottesville and London, 2001), 4.

[16] Jennifer Munroe, “First ‘Mother of Science’: Milton’s Eve, Knowledge, and Nature,” in *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity*, ed. Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche (New York, 2011), 46, 45, 41, 42, 44, 39.

[17] Munroe, “First ‘Mother of Science,’” 47.

[18] Francis Bacon, “Of Gardens,” in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford, 1996), 430.

[19] William Lawson, *A New Orchard and Garden* (1618; London, 1631), 69.

[20] Homer, *The Odyssey*, 7.117–119.

[21] Low, *The Georgic Revolution*, 160.

[22] Milton, *Prolusions*, in *The Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Frank A. Patterson, 18 vols. (New York, 1931-1938), 12:205.

[23] Low, *The Georgic Revolution*, 319–20.

[24] See Roy Strong, *The English Renaissance Garden in England* (London, 1979), 134.

[25] See Jill Francis, *Gardens and Gardening in Early Modern England and Wales 1560–1660* (New Haven and London, 2018), 176–77.

[26] See Andrew McRae, "Husbandry Manuals and the Language of Agrarian Improvement," in *Culture and Cultivation: Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, edited by Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester and London, 1992), 38–40.

[27] Munroe, *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot, 2008), 10.

[28] Gervase Markham, *Country Contentments, or the Approued Booke called the English Houswife* (London, 1623), 1.

[29] Lawson, *A New Orchard*, 1, 2.

[30] Munroe, "Gender, Class, and the Art of Gardening," 206; and Munroe, *Gender and the Garden*, 6. See also Munroe, "'My innocent diversion of gardening': Mary Somerset's plants," *Renaissance Studies* 25, no. 1 (2011), 111–23.

[31] Stephen Bending, *Green Retreats: Women, Gardens and Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge, 2013), 8.

[32] Rebecca Bushnell, *Green Desire: Imagining Early Modern English Gardens* (Ithaca and London, 2003), 124.

[33] Markham, *Country Contentments*, 129.

[34] William Lawson, *The Countrie Housewifes Garden* (London, 1617), 1. See Munroe, "Gender, Class, and the Art of Gardening," 197, 202; and Munroe, *Gender and the Garden*, 33–34.

[35] Charles Evelyn, *The Lady's Recreation or the Third and Last Part of the Art of Gardening Improved* (London, 1717), 1–2.

[36] Amy L. Tigner, "Eating with Eve," *Milton Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2010), 240.

[37] Jude Welburn, "Divided Labors: Work, Nature, and the Utopian Impulse in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*," *Studies in Philology* 116, no. 3 (2019): 524.

[38] Seth Lobis, "Milton's Tended Garden and the Georgic Fall," *Milton Studies*, vol. 55, ed. Laura L. Knoppers (Pittsburgh, 2014), 89.

[39] Most editions of *Paradise Lost* point to the Latinate origins of "manuring" (cultivation by *manus*, the hand, that is by manual labor), and the reference to "More hands" in the subsequent line suggest the primacy of that meaning here. Nevertheless, as Saskia Cornes has recently argued, early modern uses of the word "manuring" provide for a "rich array of meanings, from the lowly spreading of animal or, notably, vegetable waste, to the tilling or working of land" as well as to "the cultivation of the mind and heart." Cornes, "Milton's Manuring: *Paradise Lost*, Husbandry, and the Possibilities of Waste," *Milton Studies*, vol. 61, ed. Stephen B. Dobranski (Pittsburgh, 2019), 66.

[40] Knott, "Milton's Wild Garden," 74, 78.

[41] McRae, "Husbandry Manuals," 48.

[42] Lawson, *A New Orchard*, 33.

[43] See Michael Lieb, *The Dialectics of Creation* (Amherst, 1970), 73.

[44] Lewalski, "Innocence and Experience," 91, 89. See also Welburn, "Divided Labors," 517–19.

[45] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 20.

[46] Henry More, *An Antidote against Atheisme, or, An Appeal to the Natural Faculties of the Minde of Man, whether there be not a God* (London, 1653), 65. See also William Coles, *The Art*

of Simpling. An Introduction to the Knowledge and Gathering of Plants (London, 1656), 93; and Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 20.

[47] See J. Martin Evans, *"Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford, 1968), 248–49.

[48] Evans, *"Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition*, 268.

[49] Knott, "Milton's Wild Garden," 76.

[50] McColley, *Poetry and Ecology*, 209; McColley, *Milton's Eve*, 25.

[51] Welburn, "Divided Labors," 525, 527.

[52] "conversation, *n.*, n. 2," and "conversation, *n.*, n. 7." *OED Online*. March 2020. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40748 (accessed March 30, 2020).

[53] Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, in *The Riverside Milton*, 938 (Bk 1, Ch. 2). See Rosamund Paice, "Falling in Love and Language: Earthly Companionship and Spiritual Loss in *Paradise Lost*," *Early Modern Literary Studies* SI 22 (2014): 4–6.

[54] Dydymus Mountaine [Thomas Hill], *The Gardeners Labyrinth* (London, 1577), 24. For discussions of this passage, see Charlotte Otten, "'My Native Element': Milton's Paradise and English Gardens," *Milton Studies*, vol. 5, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1973), 260; and Munroe, "Gender, Class, and the Art of Gardening: Gardening manuals in early modern England," *Prose Studies* 28, no. 2 (2006): 199.

[55] Lawson, *A New Orchard*, 69.

[56] Evelyn, *The Lady's Recreation*, 1.

[57] Bushnell, *Green Desire*, 130.

[58] See Bending, *Green Retreats*, Ch. 2.

[59] J. B. Broadbent, *Some Graver Subject: An Essay on "Paradise Lost"* (London, 1960), 255; Low, *The Georgic Revolution*, 320. See also Michals, "'Sweet Gardening Labor,'" 511–512.

[60] Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996), 269.

[61] Lewalski also makes the point that "In literary tradition pastoral places are often destroyed by invaders embodying the values of court or city or savage nature: war, deception, ambition, brute force." Lewalski, *"Paradise Lost" and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton, 1985), 176, 177.

[62] McColley, *Milton's Eve*, 114, 113.

[63] See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1964), 63.

[64] McColley, "Milton's Environmental Epic: Creature kinship and the Language of *Paradise Lost*," in *Beyond Nature Writing*, ed. Armbruster and Wallace, 58.

[65] Lobis, "Milton's Tended Garden," 101.

[66] Compare Knott, who reads this as a positive moment. Knott, *Milton's Pastoral Vision*, 126.

[67] McColley, *Poetry and Ecology*, 223.

[68] Compare Knott, *Milton's Pastoral Vision*, 11.

[69] Switzer, *The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation*, 69, 70.

[70] Knott, *Milton's Pastoral Vision*, 8. See also Christopher Fitter, "'Native Soil': The Rhetoric of Exile Lament and Exile Consolidation in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies*, vol. 20, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh, 1984), 150.

[71] Knott, *Milton's Pastoral Vision*, 13.

[72] See Marilyn Arnold, "Milton's Accessible God: The Role of the Son in *Paradise Lost*." *Milton Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1973): 70.

[73] Henry Vaughan, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Alan Rudrum (Harmondsworth, 1976), 197.

[74] Jim Bartos, “The Spirituall Orchard: God, Garden and Landscape in Seventeenth-Century England Before the Restoration,” *Garden History* 38, no. 2 (2010), 187.

[75] Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2004), 168–69.

[76] Mandy Green, “The Virgin in the Garden: Milton’s Ovidian Eve,” *The Modern Language Review* 100, no. 4 (2005): 916.

[77] Margaret Hoby, *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599–1605*, ed. Joanna Moody (Stroud, 1998), 211.

[78] Knott, “Milton’s Wild Garden,” 80.

[79] Munroe, *Gender and the Garden*, 3.

[80] See Alexander Samson, “Introduction: *Locus Amoenus*: Gardens and Horticulture in the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Studies* 25, no. 1 (“Gardens and Horticulture in Early modern Europe”): 6, 11. While evidently not averse to all features of an aesthetic garden, Milton does take issue with its more extreme elements: those flowers that are “worthy of Paradise” are the ones “which not nice Art / In Beds and curious Knots, but Nature boon / Powrd forth profuse on Hill and Dale and Plaine” (4.241–43). See McColley, *Milton’s Eve*, 130–31.

[81] Edwards, *Milton and the Natural World*, 171.

[82] Milton, *Of Reformation*, *Works of John Milton*, 3:53.

[83] Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton’s Eve* (Cambridge, 2011), 153.

[84] Michals, “‘Sweet Gardening Labor’,” 499.

[85] Andrew Mattison, *Milton's Uncertain Eden: Understanding Place in "Paradise Lost"* (New York and London, 2007), 89, 84. See Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, 1979), 131.

[86] Welburn, "Divided Labors," 511.

[87] Knott, "Milton's Wild Garden," 77.

[88] Knott, *Milton's Pastoral Vision*, 58.

[89] See Gaile McGregor, *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden: Notes Toward a Syntactics of Place* (Toronto, 1988), 12.

[90] J. B. Broadbent, "Milton's Paradise," *Modern Philology* 51, no. 3 (1954), 170.

[91] Christopher Koester, "Solitude and Difference in Books 8 and 9 of Paradise Lost," *Milton Studies*, vol. 57, ed. Laura L. Knoppers (Pittsburgh, 2016), 156.

[92] Bacon, "Of Friendship," in *The Major Works*, 390–91; see Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. and ed. Harris Rackham (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1932), 10–13 (1253a28–29 [1.1.12]).