

Early Modern Literary Studies

Falling in Love and Language: Earthly Companionship and Spiritual Loss in *Paradise Lost*

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It might be said that, as the first two humans, prelapsarian Adam and Eve form a divinely-ordained, Edenic community of two. In *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674), John Milton also represents them as part of a broader spiritual community, in which God and angels stop by to foster the bond between Heaven and Earth, and even to discuss the need for, and nature of, companionship itself. Yet Adam and Eve are also presented as individual beings, and, in the process of negotiating their relationships to God, the angels, Satan, each other and themselves, they become fractious, fall and are exiled: as initially their community was several, so their loss of community is multiple. In this, they are quite unlike the Adam and Eve that Milton presents in *Tetrachordon* (1645), a couple that exists harmoniously in the abstract, and within a scheme in which the relationship between God and man maps neatly onto the relationship of man and woman, and in turn that between Christ and his Church.¹ In *Tetrachordon*, there are no inconveniently individualised personalities to complicate matters, and there is no need to explain how such a perfect pair came to fall since its commentary is not concerned with that part of the Genesis narrative.

Yet the link to Milton's divorce tracts of the 1640s (*The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, *The Judgment of Martin Bucer*, *Tetrachordon*, and *Colasterion*) must be further scrutinised, as it was there that Milton first presented his companionate marriage model, a model that is certainly invoked in *Paradise Lost*. The tracts posit companionate marriage as an achievable ideal, one that re-enacts the perfection of the divinely-ordained union of Adam and Eve. The Edenic origins of this companionate marriage ideal, first introduced in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), are

¹ John Milton, *Tetrachordon*, in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. by Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 1030. Unless otherwise stated, all references to Milton's poetry and prose are taken from this edition.

underscored in *Tetrachordon* (1645).² Discussing God's statement at Genesis 2.18 that he will make Adam 'a help *meet* for him', Milton writes:

all agree effectually conformity of disposition and affection to be hereby signify'd; which God as it were, not satisfy'd with the naming of a help, goes on describing *another self, a second self, a very self it self*.³

In its reference to second selves Milton's commentary yokes Christian marriage (intrinsically hierarchical and heteronormative) to the traditionally competing models of classical and Renaissance amity (friendship based on same-sex likeness, whether homosocial or homoerotic in tendency). Where this pairing is set up in *Paradise Lost*, however, it is subjected to the stresses and strains of experience (as construed and constructed by narrative), to the unavoidable trajectory of Adam and Eve's fate, and to their attempts to verbalise their feelings. In contrast to the Milton of the divorce tracts, who uses the languages of love and amity to construct his companionate-marriage ideal, the Milton of *Paradise Lost* exposes the problems inherent in – perhaps even the artful seductions of – such languages.⁴

The disparity between the tracts' and the epic's treatments of marital union is, perhaps, not surprising. As with all such works, Milton's tracts lay down principles in a manner that suggests that moral and political choices and actions can be governed by reason, and that such principles are straightforwardly transferrable to any given situation.

² *The Doctrine of Discipline and Divorce*, Bk 1, Ch. 2, p. 938.

³ *Tetrachordon*, p. 1034.

⁴ Nonetheless, a series of critics has asserted the fundamental comparability of the presentation of marriage in the divorce tracts and Milton's biblical epic. For Thomas Luxon, 'Milton's work, especially the divorce tracts and the major poems, can very profitably be read as major documents in [the] struggle for redefinition [of marriage] and supersession [of friendship by marriage]'. See *Single Imperfection: Milton, Marriage and Friendship* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005), p. xii. Victoria Kahn states that 'With the exception of *Paradise Lost*, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* is probably the closest Milton ever came to writing a manual of "domesticall duties"', thereby implying that *Paradise Lost*'s treatment of marriage operates as a kind of guide, and does so in a manner analogous to the divorce tracts. See "'The Duty to Love": Passion and Obligation in Early Modern Political Theory', *Representations*, 68 (1999), 84–107 (p. 90). Gregory Chaplin writes that 'In the epic, [Milton] resolves some of the instabilities that haunt the divorce tracts. Adam and Eve are more completely "one Flesh, one Heart, one Soul" (8.499)'. See "'One Flesh, One Heart, One Soul": Renaissance Friendship and Miltonic Marriage', *Modern Philology*, 99 (2001), 266–92 (p. 291). Nyquist offers a summary of 'The entire discussion of the relation between *Paradise Lost*'s retrospective creation narratives and the divorce tracts' in which she states that 'in Book VII's recollected colloquy Adam is revealed articulating the doctrine of marriage, [and] in Book IV's recollected self-mirroring Eve is portrayed enacting its discipline'. See 'The Genesis of Gendered Subjectivity in the Divorce Tracts and *Paradise Lost*', in *Re-Membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, ed. by Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 99–127 (pp. 122–3). Jamie Ferguson contends that, in Milton's work, 'theological polemic and poetic drama might be read as facets of a single comprehensive project'. See 'Satan's Supper: Language and Sacrament in *Paradise Lost*', in *Uncircumscribed Mind: Reading Milton Deeply*, ed. by Charles W. Durham and Kristin A. Pruitt (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2008), pp. 129–140 (p. 130).

Whilst clearly Milton's divorce tracts were motivated by a personal situation (presenting a case that, if it had succeeded, would have legitimised Milton's divorce from Mary Powell), that does not alter the fact that he argued in the academic tradition. By contrast, literature has a tendency to disrupt reasoned principles, particularly as they are subjected to the disturbing tendencies of particular narrative situations. Milton's very dramatisation of companionship within *Paradise Lost*, thus, suggests a willingness to scrutinise theoretical ideals and classifications, and to recognise that, in experience (or narrative's construing of it), companionships are apt to flounder.

Indeed, as Ullrich Langer notes in *Perfect Friendship*, 'the literary world [is] a reaction to, a product of, a transgression of an intellectual-moral context' and Renaissance literature often serves as a vehicle for 'an exploration, a trying-out, a testing, of options [...] of hypotheses, of situations'.⁵ Such exploratory activity is identified by Bronwen Price in this collection, in her essay on Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666): there, the protagonist's interventions in the new world she encounters enact the testing of 'various types of community – political, scientific, religious' and later Platonic friendship.⁶ By introducing troubled companionship within prelapsarian Eden, Milton, like Cavendish, interrogates how forms of community operate within an ostensibly utopian space.

This essay, therefore, perceives trouble in paradise. However, I will argue that the trouble lies not primarily in the subordinate status of Eve or the presence of Raphael's alternative companionship with Adam (though these issues, having been so frequently raised by critics, must be addressed), but from tensions between the language and enactment of (marital) companionship. The problems of translating the language (abstract theories) of companionship into practice (actually being involved in a relationship with another individual) are reflected in the problems of translating practice back into language: Adam's apparently straightforward understanding of companionship in his request for a mate is muddled by the complexities of his relationship with Eve, and his feelings for Eve emerge as not only confused but dangerous in his subsequent attempts to express them. The falls between language and action, thus, operate both ways, the confusion mounting and becoming inescapable as language and relationships act and react upon each other. Moreover, crucially, these problems exist in prelapsarian Eden, predating, and providing the opportunity for, Eve's temptation by the serpent.

⁵ Ullrich Langer, *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1994), pp. 12, 29.

⁶ Bronwen Price, 'Worlds within Worlds: Community, Companionship and Autonomy in Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*', *EMLS*, Special Issue 22 (2014), p. 2.

The Fall of Man, then, is yoked irrevocably to the companionship of man; the union of Adam and Eve is the originary event in their separation from God; and the example of the first human couple signals that earthly companionship all too quickly tends towards problematic exclusivity that compromises spiritual community. As Cornelia Wilde notes in her essay in this collection, Christianity's ideal of universal charity and amity's construction of ideal friendship as exclusive had long been noted (by such figures as St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas) as pulling in contrary directions. Thus Chaplin is not quite correct when he says that 'amity is central to God's plan and final glory'.⁷ Rather, whilst using the language of amity, God plans a literally universal charity when he proclaims that all of heaven (which, at this stage in events, amounts to all creation) shall be 'United as one individual Soule' (5.610). The collapse of Milton's companionate marriage ideal in this context seems inevitable, since marriage is the ultimate exclusive bond in Christian society ('forsaking all others'). And yet it is quite clear that marital union in *Paradise Lost* is divinely-sanctioned and created. Indeed, as Eric Selinger writes, 'God and Adam did not make a sufficient, happy pair. Quite the contrary: their solitude-à-deux is the first thing in creation God declares *not* to be good (Gen. 2:18)'.⁸

The discussion between God and Adam that emerges out of the latter's request for a mate (8.415–26) is perhaps the closest Milton comes in *Paradise Lost* to his discourses on friendship and marriage in the tracts. Adam reasons that, whilst God's perfection is exemplified in his being 'infinite' and 'absolute' (8.420, 421), man's 'single imperfection' (8.423) – his imperfection in being single and his only imperfection – marks him as in need of companionship: 'conversation with his like' is needed 'to help, / Or solace his defects' (8.418–9). Adam's understanding is judged sound by God ('[I] find thee knowing [...] of thy self', 8.438–9), and indeed the emphasis on conversation echoes *Doctrine and Discipline*'s assertion that 'in Gods intention a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of marriage'.⁹ Taking Adam's words at face value, therefore, and given the divine and authorial endorsements of his ideas, the question of what went wrong is inevitable.

Louise Schleiner argues, on the basis of Eve's gender and 'particular female traits', that the problem with Adam and Eve's relationship lies in the fact that 'Milton created a gap

⁷ Gregory Chaplin, 'Milton against Servitude: Classical Friendship, Tyranny, and the Law of Nature', in *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700*, ed. by Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López and Lorna Hutson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 209–23 (p. 220).

⁸ Eric Selinger, *What is it then between Us? Traditions of Love in American Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 9.

⁹ *Doctrine and Discipline*, Bk 1, Ch. 2, p. 938.

of ordinary desire between what Eve was and what Adam had requested'.¹⁰ In one important respect, however, this is as unfounded as Adam's forgetful or hypocritical questioning of God's selection of a female mate when he falls (10.888–95). God does not specify to Adam what he has in mind when he promises 'Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self, / Thy wish exactly to thy hearts desire' (8.450–1), but the sex of Adam's wished-for mate might be inferred from his observation about animals that 'rejoyce / Each with their kinde, Lion with Lioness' (8.392–4). God's provision of a female mate is also fully in keeping with Milton's reading of Genesis 2.18 in *Tetrachordon*, where he maintains that, in God's statement that 'It is not good that man should be alone', 'alone is meant alone without woman'.¹¹ Yet Adam's retrospective questioning highlights not simply his petulance, or even the centuries of speculation on God's reasons for creating a female helpmeet.¹² It also underscores the problems inherent in translating ideas into reality, or theory into practice, especially when the originator of the idea has no experience of the thing he wishes for.

The inequality of Adam and Eve has provided more fertile ground for blame. As Anne Ferry details, St Paul's interpretation of the order of creation set out in Genesis 2.21–2 constituted an authoritative New Testament source for Milton's differentiation of Adam and Eve at 4.295–311.¹³ She notes that 'Once Adam and Eve are distinguished from each other by the wording "though both / Not equal," they are presented in the order of their creation', with Adam's 'superior dignity' and Eve's 'nature as the weaker creature' reflected not only in the line 'Hee for God only, shee for God in him' (4.299) but also in the associations of their physical attributes with strength and submission.¹⁴ This inequality seemingly sits in conflict with Adam's implicit request when he asks God, 'Among unequals what societie / Can sort, what harmonie or true delight?' (8.383–4), and it is hard to make the case that Adam is referring only to a distinction between man and the animals, because he does not make explicit any such qualification.

Yet Adam's words, which today seem so clear, are in fact anything but, their ambiguity turning on the duality of the word 'equal' in the seventeenth century. Wendy Olmsted notes that "Equal" actually implies something like "the complement of," as in Richard

¹⁰ Louise Schleiner, 'Pastoral Male Friendship and Miltonic Marriage: Textual Systems Transposed', *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 2 (1990), 41–58 (pp. 50, 53).

¹¹ *Tetrachordon*, p. 1032.

¹² See Edmund Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 78.

¹³ Anne Ferry, 'Milton's Creation of Eve', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 28 (1988), 113–32 (pp. 114–6).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Eden's *Decades* of 1555'.¹⁵ Other examples include the 1611 *King James Bible*'s translation of John 5.18 (which reports Jesus's claim 'that God was his Father, making himself equal with God'). Yet there are also numerous examples of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts in which 'equal' means exactly what it does to us today (e.g. the *King James*'s rendering of Revelation 21.16: 'the length and the breadth and the height of [the new Jerusalem] are equal'). What is most interesting about Milton's usage is not that he employs the word in one way or the other, but that he draws on both meanings. As elsewhere in his epic, language here is slippery and meaning double, and Milton's repeated focus on (in)equality forces us to confront this problem: God gives Adam the equal (complementary) partner that he has asked for, whilst at the same time Adam and Eve are not equal in the sense that has survived today. Again, difficulty is located in the gap between talking about a thing and translating that talk into a working model.

Moreover, even the presence of a hierarchy is not reason in itself for a relationship in *Paradise Lost* to be disharmonious, nor for it to lead to the disharmonising of the entire physical and spiritual universe (see 10.651–91). God and the Son are the ultimate example of harmony in hierarchy, but the friendship of Adam and Raphael – and that their discourse is conducted in terms of a friendship is emphasised (e.g. 5.229–30 and 9.1–3)¹⁶ – is also fundamentally unequal but harmonious. Raphael summarises that man's reasoning is 'Discursive' and that of angels 'Intuitive', but that these differ 'but in degree, of kind the same' (5.488, 490). In a prelapsarian world, the difference in degree, or unequal status, of Raphael and man, and even God and man, is no bar to friendly visitations (see 5.372–5, 7.569–73). Moreover, while inequality may at first lead Adam to be rather formal in his address to Raphael (5.452–67), he soon becomes more familiar with his guest, exposing his own strategy 'suttly to detain' the angel by telling his own story so that he might gain Raphael's reply (8.206–9) and exclaiming 'while I sit with thee, I seem in Heav'n' (8.210). Indeed, Eve goes so far as to propose that that inequality is crucial to love: she tells Adam that she has 'So farr the happier Lot, enjoying thee / Præ-eminent', while by contrast he 'Like consort to thyself canst nowhere find' (4.446–8).

Numerous critics have focused on the way in which Adam's relationship with Raphael sits in tension with that of Adam and Eve; indeed, Milton places this tension unavoidably (and literally) at the narrative centre of his epic. It is Adam whom Raphael

¹⁵ Wendy Olmsted, *The Imperfect Friend: Emotion and Rhetoric in Sidney, Milton and their Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 193. Cf. Claudia M. Champagne, 'Adam and his "Other Self" in *Paradise Lost*: A Lacanian Study in Psychic Development', *Milton Quarterly*, 25 (1991), 48–59 (p. 52).

¹⁶ See Olmsted, p. 198.

first discerns (5.299) and, though at first Adam calls Eve to ‘Haste hither’ to meet the angel with him, almost in the same breath he revises his instruction, telling her to ‘goe with speed’ to fetch food for their guest (5.308, 313). This leaves him to meet ‘His god-like Guest [...] without more train / Accompani’d therefore with his own compleat / Perfections’ (5.351–3). When Raphael does meet Eve, his salutation of her focuses on a link between the fruitfulness of her womb and the fruits they are to eat (5.388–91) and is quickly superseded by a description of the table set up (5.391–5), suggesting that both angel and narrator are more interested in the spread of food than the presence of the first woman. Moreover, though reference is made to an initial dinner ‘discourse’ (5.395), which members of the party are involved in this discourse is not specified. Certainly the only designated speakers in the embowered conversation, from 5.396 to its close at the end of Book 8, are Adam and Raphael. Even Eve’s presence as a listener seems to be overlooked by Raphael: as Mary Nyquist observes, he ‘specifically and repeatedly addresse[s] a listener who is ‘gendered and embodied’ (in Adam) as male;¹⁷ Raphael also tells Adam to ‘warne / Thy weaker’ (6.908–9) about Satan, although she is subsequently confirmed as being still present (7.50–1). Finally, after sitting for some time ‘retir’d’ but still ‘in sight’ (8.41), Eve, we are told, detects her husband ‘Entering on studious thoughts abstruse’ (8.40). However, we are reminded of her presence only for her immediately to leave the party – apparently with a ‘lowliness Majestic [...], / And Grace that won who saw to wish her stay’ (8.42–3), though it is not at all clear that Adam and Raphael *do* see her leave, since she remains silent in, and they offer no comment on, her departure. Indeed, it is notable that, in stark contrast with the seeming lack of attention she is given at the table, her fruits and flowers ‘at her coming sprung’ (8.46). The budding friendship between Adam and Raphael, therefore, flourishes to the exclusion of Eve.

The narrator swiftly clarifies that Eve leaves the conversation not because she is ‘not with such discourse / Delighted, or not capable her eare / Of what was high’ (8.48–50), but because she would prefer to hear things from Adam when the pair are alone together (8.51–3). Yet it is not really Eve’s preference that is at issue here. Adam, already awestruck at his first sight of Raphael (5.309–311), by the beginning of Book 8 (shortly before Eve’s departure) is so caught up in listening to his guest that he does not realise the angel has stopped speaking (8.1–3). In fact, the way in which this moment is couched – Raphael ‘in *Adams* Eare / So Charming left his voice’ (8.1–2) – suggests not only a heavenly parallel to descriptions of Satan’s effect on Eve’s ear during the temptation scene (9.736–7, 9.1067), but also the erotic symbolism of the ear as

¹⁷ Nyquist, p. 116.

receptacle (as in Sandro Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, c. 1483).¹⁸ Adam, it might be said, is – temporarily at least – no less seduced by Raphael than Eve is by Satan.

As the thoughts of departing Eve focus on Adam's kisses – looking forward to intimate conversation intermixed 'With conjugal Caresses, from his Lip / Not Words alone pleas'd her' (8.56–7) – so too Adam and Raphael turn their attention to their own and each other's mouths and lips. Though claiming to have been 'fully [...] satisfi'd' (8.180) by the information Raphael imparts, Adam soon confesses that he is far from fully satisfied in another respect: whereas the 'Fruits of Palm-tree [...] satiate, and soon fill,' Adam tells his guest, 'thy words with Grace Divine / Imbu'd, bring to their sweetness no satietie' (8.211–6). While Eve is associated with earthly supper, Raphael symbolises to Adam a spiritual food that he craves. Moreover, Raphael's response heightens the erotic flavour of this exchange: 'Nor are thy lips ungraceful,' he admits, adding 'Nor tongue ineloquent' (8.218–9); and later, Raphael wears 'a smile that glow'd / Celestial rosie red, Loves proper hue' (8.618–9; see 9.239–40). This ambiguous smile seems partly to arise from remembrance of the heavenly 'Union of Pure with Pure / Desiring' (8.627–8) but is also directed at Adam, 'To whom the Angel [...] Answer'd' (8.618–20).

Similar links between companionship, conversation and consumption are fostered by Charles Diodati in a passionate letter to Milton, in which he writes: 'I ache for your companionship [...] so that we might enjoy a feast of one another's philosophical and cultured words'.¹⁹ Luxon states that the pairing of Adam and Raphael was 'Milton's idealized version of the love he shared with Charles – highly erotic conversation, intensely and exclusively masculine, intellectual and strictly nonsexual'.²⁰ Yet in this account Luxon retreats unpersuasively into the biographical, after having offered compelling arguments for 'Milton's doctrine of "conversation" ow[ing] far more to classical friendship doctrine [...] than to his experience of friendship with Charles Diodati' and for classical ideas having dictated the expression of Milton and Diodati's friendship in their letters, rather than their relationship having defined Milton's ideas on friendship and marriage.²¹ It is debateable, therefore, whether the Adam-Raphael friendship imitates the Milton-Diodati one, or whether both simply draw on conventional tropes of love and friendship. What is clear is that both are enacted in passionate terms.

¹⁸ The reference to the Muse's nightly pourings into the narrator's ear (9.47) forms another parallel.

¹⁹ Quoted in Chaplin, 'One Flesh', pp. 276–7.

²⁰ Luxon, p. 139.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 80, 82.

In fact, regardless of its nonsexual nature, with its overpowering homoerotic charge, the Adam-Raphael relationship clearly threatens, for a while at least, to destabilise the central, heterosexual pairing of Adam with Eve because it also seems so clearly to embody the ‘meet and happy conversation’ of Milton’s companionate marriage ideal. This being so, it becomes necessary to ask, as Schleiner does:

Why did Milton import this predominantly male dinner party into the biblical Eden story (it has no basis whatever there), at which Eve sits for only half the time and does not so much as ask a question or even respond when greeted, much less make any comment?²²

I agree with Schleiner that the problem is not explained away by identifying biblical models for the conversation, but I do not follow her to her conclusion that ‘Adam needed a homosocial relationship, beyond Eve yet partly in her presence, with that missing equal male companion (“like consort”)²³. Firstly, it has been established that the Adam-Raphael relationship is not equal. Secondly, though Raphael may charm Adam’s ear, the tension in this case is resolved just prior to the end of their conversation. Here, Adam implicitly distinguishes any (erotic) friendship he might have with the angel from what he conceives of as a more comprehensive and satisfying marital companionship: he declares Eve’s ‘words and actions’ to be ‘mixt with Love / And sweet compliance, which declare unfeign’d / Union of Mind, or in us both one Soule’ (8.602–4); this, he contends, reveals a ‘Harmonie to behold in wedded pair / More grateful therefore harmonious sound to the eare’ (8.605–6). Like Eve, ‘Not Words alone pleas[e]’ Adam (8.57).

Far from remaining linked to the ‘mute and spiritless mate’ that Milton rejects in *Doctrine and Discipline*,²⁴ therefore, Eve’s apparently problematic presence and departure during the meal are reframed as signs of the happy union attainable with the kind of quiet, modest, submissive woman so frequently praised in early modern writings. Eve’s silence becomes, through Adam’s praises of her, an indication of a mutual bond that goes beyond words. While conversation may be the ‘chiefest and noblest end of marriage’, Milton means something more by conversation than mere talk: as Luxon notes, ‘there appears to be virtually nothing in the history of the word’s usage

²² Schleiner, p. 47.

²³ Ibid., pp. 47, 55.

²⁴ *Doctrine and Discipline*, Bk 1, Ch, 4, p. 939.

before the eighteenth century to indicate it could be successfully used to denote the exclusively nonsensual or distinctly rational aspects of human interactions'.²⁵

The conversation (general intimacy; *OED*, 'conversation, *n.*', def. n. 2) of Adam and Eve's relationship, thus, is certainly brought under pressure by the conversation (discourse; 'conversation, *n.*' def. n. 7) of Adam and Raphael, but the characteristics of the latter conversation suggest it as a 'Good temptation' for Adam to prove himself by.²⁶ Serving 'to provide a social encounter in which the paradoxical attractiveness and innocence of unfallen sexuality can be tested, and its problems illuminated in both practice and conversation', the scene with Raphael operates as another of God's (or Milton's) friendship trials for Adam.²⁷ Eventually – though after an ambiguity created and sustained over more than two and a half thousand lines of poetry – Adam does prove himself and return to the heteronormative fold: his companionship with Eve is shown to prevail over the competing homosocial model of friendship offered by Raphael (the model of companionship most closely resembling the amity ideal). However enticing the spiritual food of conversation with Raphael is, his discourse is the wrong 'fruit' (see 8.210–6). This reinforces the contrast between Adam's 'Good temptation' and the temptation of Eve – who, with her too 'eager appetite' (9.740), later succumbs in eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Adam's prioritising of his marital relationship also returns readers to earthbound Eve's association with food 'of taste to please / True appetite' (5.304–5). Ultimately, therefore – in keeping with Milton's privileging of male-female over same-sex companionship in such works as *Tetrachordon*, and despite Adam's post-Fall complaint to God – Raphael does not represent, to prelapsarian Adam at least, Luxon's 'more appropriate [...] lover, more fit [...] conversational partner, than Eve'.²⁸

Moreover, in Adam's prioritisation of his marital relationship above his friendship with Raphael there is a clear contrast to the seraphic companionship models presented in this collection by Wilde. For Robert Boyle (*Seraphic Love*, 1659), earthly loves, including the love of a man for a woman, must be 'discarded and transcended' in preparation for

²⁵ Luxon, p. 72. See also Olmsted, p. 19. On the relationship between (sexual) 'intercourse' and 'conversation' in the divorce tracts, see Luxon, pp. 61–8 and James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), pp. 204–5.

²⁶ John Milton, *Christian Doctrine*, in *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Vol. 6, ed. by Maurice Kelley, trans. by John Carey, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), Bk 1, Ch. 8, pp. 338–9.

²⁷ Turner, *One Flesh*, p. 267.

²⁸ See *Tetrachordon*, p. 1032 and Luxon, p. 139. Cf. Price's observation that, typically, 'friendship discourses [...] define ideal amity through its distinction from other types of relationship that are identified as being, in contrast, deficient in some way'. See Price, p. 6. Though, as I have noted, the 'good temptation' here offers Adam the possibility of doing likewise, his prioritisation of his relationship with Eve marks Milton's departure from this pattern.

‘the more elevated and exclusive seraphic love of God’.²⁹ The companionate and charitable rendering of this model that Wilde identifies as existing between Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick, is certainly less exclusive. Yet, even this seraphic friendship, whilst existing alongside marriage (Elizabeth’s to Denis Gauden), also sits in tension with it. Whereas the Gauden-Patrick friendship apparently survived such tensions, Adam’s friendship with Raphael clearly does not: he chooses Eve, falls with Eve, and is expelled from Eden and all its possibilities for further conversation with the seraphim. Far from providing ‘the best possible preparation for [...] ascent towards and union with the divine’, then, Raphael’s discourse with Adam is insufficient to check Adam’s route away from the divine.³⁰ If seraphic love is in part defined by the capacity of the seraphim figures ‘to infuse [...] humans with their devotional heat’, again, it must ultimately be said that the impact of Raphael’s archangelic friendship is short-lived at best.³¹

As previously noted, Raphael’s conversation with Adam finds its parallel in Satan’s conversation with Eve, but here too we find no cause for the loss of ‘Harmonie [...] in wedded pair.’ Disharmony is already signalled in Eve’s fateful decision to go off alone on the morning of her temptation, and, ironically, it is precisely the pair’s conversation that she gives as her initial reason for doing so:

what wonder if so near
Looks intervene and smiles, or object new
Casual discourse draw on, which intermits
Our dayes work brought to little [?] (9.221–4)

Conversation (in both its broad and narrow sense), she says, is distracting them from their work – work which is already failing to control Eden’s fecundity (9.207–12). Adam politely praises Eve’s reasoning (9.229–32), but then counters that God is not so demanding

as to debarr us when we need
Refreshment, whether food, or talk between,
Food of the mind, or this sweet intercourse
Of looks and smiles, for smiles from Reason flow,
To brute deni’d, and are of Love the food (9.236–40).

²⁹ Wilde, ‘Seraphic Companions: The Friendship between Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick’, *EMLS*, Special Issue 22 (2014), p. 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Until ‘younger hands ere long / Assist us’ (9.246–7), he says, there is no requirement to tend the garden beyond what they need.

Thus having, as he believes, debunked Eve’s claim about the onerousness of their work, Adam returns to the issue of conversation. He suggests that ‘much converse perhaps / Thee satiate[s]’ (9.247–8) – seemingly forgetting Eve’s exclusion from the previous night’s discussion with the moreish Raphael – and indicates that he is not averse to the suggested separation, ‘For solitude sometimes is best societie, / And short retirement urges sweet returne’ (9.249–50). Whether or not this is a ‘humanist response’, as Olmsted claims,³² it certainly ignores the key implication of Eve’s reference to the Garden: where Adam sees only ‘paths & Bowers’ which ‘our joynt hands / Will keep from Wilderness with ease, as wide / As we need walk’ (9.244–6), Eve sees ‘wanton growth’ (9.211) and a ‘narrow circuit strait’nd by a Foe’ (9.323). The disorder of their union is even suggested in an implied reversal in traditional gender roles: unlike ‘domestick *Adam*’ (9.318), adventurous Eve is already thinking herself beyond the area that they ‘need’ to inhabit, marking her mental separation from Adam.

This mental separation makes somewhat redundant the reservations about physical separation from Eve that Adam next explains. Though his violent language – referring to Eve being ‘sever’d’ from him (9.252, 366) – stresses his conception of the unnaturalness of their separation, in fact that separation has already taken place (or indeed Adam and Eve were never unified to begin with), and with no attendant violence or pain to signal it. Moreover, Adam does nothing to obviate either mental or physical separation by his plea that Eve ‘leave not the faithful side / That gave thee being, still shades thee and protects’ (9.265–6) and his admonishment that

The Wife, where danger or dishonour lurks,
Safest and seemliest by her Husband staies,
Who guards her, or with her the worst endures. (9.267–9)

Eve is offended because, for her, the notion that God would leave their ‘happie State / [...] so imperfet [...] / As not secure to single or combin’d’ (9.337–9) is too ridiculous to be entertained; she therefore interprets Adam’s resistance as a sign that he distrusts her. Piqued, she not only tells her husband that she is already aware of the threat, but in doing so also pointedly alludes to the fact that she returned safely from one separation the previous evening, when he was busy conversing with Raphael:

³² Olmsted, p. 200.

That such an Enemie we have, who seeks
Our ruin, both by thee informd I learne,
And from the parting Angel over-heard
As in a shadie nook I stood behind,
Just therefore returned at shut of Evening Flours. (9.274–8)

Adam's eventual relinquishing of Eve recognises that 'thy stay, not free, absents thee more' (9.372), acknowledging, with some dramatic irony, the possibility of being mentally and emotionally removed from someone though physically close.

The scene dramatises not only the concept of Free Will, but also the distinctions between Adam and Eve that keep them 'individual' in the modern sense (*OED*, 'individual, *adj.* and *n.*' def. A.4) rather than the now obsolete senses of indivisible or inseparable from each other (def. A.1–2): separation has already taken place, and 'Conjugal Love' has been 'disturb[ed]' (9.262–3), physically as well as mentally, long before Eve leaves Adam to be tempted by Satan. Far from marking the onset of their separation, the image recording Eve's agency when 'from her Husbands hand her hand / Soft she withdrew' (9.385–6) actually marks the culmination of a series of prior separations, and does so in a manner that metaphorically undoes their marriage, first enacted when Adam's 'gentle hand / Seisd' Eve's and she 'yielded' (4.488–9). Thus, whilst it might have been true that it would be 'Hopeless to circumvent [Adam and Eve] joynd' (9.259), the 'malicious Foe' (9.253) that Adam imagines watching them need only read between the lines 'to find / His wish and best advantage, us asunder' (9.257–8).

Neither Raphael's friendship with Adam, nor Satan's flattery of Eve, then, are to blame for the loss of 'Harmonie [...] in wedded pair.' Adam's claim that man is 'In unitie defective' (8.425) takes in both the idea of imperfect oneness (*OED*, 'unity, *n.*' def. 1a) and collective imperfection (def. 4a): however much man may try to offset his 'single imperfection' through union and reproduction, 'because each image is a separate entity, there is no guarantee that it will interact in harmony with others'.³³ Thus, though Adam's wording may intend 'defective oneness', again prelapsarian language carries ominous double meanings and the key to his and Eve's disharmony turns out simply to be the potential for it in the co-existence of one with another. Marital harmony comes under threat less from external forces than from the competing personalities and wills of

³³ Chaplin, 'Milton against Servitude', p. 221.

Adam and Eve, and in this respect Eve's very creation can be seen as a crucial staging-post along the way to the Fall.

Moreover, although Satan may envy Adam and Eve when he overhears them talking about their wonderful relationship (4.502–11), it might be said that on this occasion it is he who is seduced by words. Adam and Eve's love declarations, enchanting as they may sound, seem increasingly confused as to the nature of their relationship to each other – a confusion that thrives on the tension between the Christian, classical and Renaissance models of love and friendship that Milton had yoked together in the companionate marriage ideal of the divorce tracts. Invoking both Genesis 2.24 ('they shall be one flesh', *Authorized King James Version*) and classical amity's conception of true friends as 'second selves' and 'one soul in two bodies',³⁴ Adam declares that man and woman 'shall be one Flesh, one Heart, one Soule' (8.499). Yet Adam's easy slippage from 'one Flesh' via 'one Heart' to 'one Soule' belies the *uneasiness* of the combination of these models, and of the realities of his pairing with Eve. While the clever negotiations of the divorce tracts mean that the companionate marriage can survive in the abstract realm of the divorce tracts, the tragic path of Adam and Eve's relationship indicates the fundamental impossibility, even in prelapsarian Eden, of unproblematic union.

Indeed, despite having passed the theoretical component of God's companionship test, Adam has problems with his perception and practice of companionship from the moment that he sees Eve. He initially addresses her as 'Part of my Soul' (4.487), a phrase that sits comfortably with the classical friendship model; however, the aural similarities and narrative proximity of his chronologically later 'Sole partner and sole part of all these joyes' (4.411) highlight how easily he slips from 'Soul' to 'sole', from a desire for 'solace' (4.486) to an unhelpful and unnatural subjection to Eve, as his 'sole delight' (10.941). The cause of Adam's confusion is explained by him to Raphael in Book 8:

when I approach
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
And in her self compleat, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do or say,
Seems wisest, vertuousest, discreetest, best;
All higher knowledge in her presence falls
Degraded, wisdom in discourse with her
Looses discount'nanc't, and like folly shewes;

³⁴ Luxon, pp. ix-x.

Authority and reason on her waite,
As one intended first, not after made
Occasionally; and to consummate all,
Greatness of mind and nobleness thir seat
Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
About her, as a guard Angelic plac't. (8.546–59)

This statement of Adam's love for Eve undermines the hierarchical order prescribed by Milton's God in his creation of the pair, and the suggestion of idolatry – in the context of the Fall, phrases like 'Her loveliness, so absolute' surely signify more than 'lavish superlatives [...] that balance ambiguously between egalitarian tribute and slavish gallantry'³⁵ – must function as an alarm bell. Yet Raphael's subsequent chastisement of Adam is hardly necessary, since the latter already knows that these instinctive responses to Eve are out of kilter with 'the prime end / Of Nature' (8.540–1). The problem is that knowing the theory is not enough to stop him feeling as he does in practice, and, although he goes on to stress that (at this stage at least) Eve's qualities 'subject [him] not' (8.607), before long that is not so certain. As Barbara Lewalski notes, after Adam's explanation of his transgression in Book 10, he is 'rebuked by the Son for idolatry: "Was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey / Before his voice"'.³⁶

By the time Eve asks Adam to join her in eating from the Tree of Knowledge, he no longer even seems sure about 'the prime end / Of Nature', and the 'one Flesh, one Heart, one Soule' conception returns to haunt his words. Two proximate statements, the second echoing and expanding upon the first in terms of both idea and syntax, underscore the dangers of human companionship to man's relationship with God:

I feel
The Link of Nature draw me: Flesh of Flesh,
Bone of my Bone thou art, and from thy State
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe. (9.913–6)

I feel
The Bond of Nature draw me to my owne,
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
Our State cannot be severd, we are one,
One Flesh; to loose thee were to loose my self. (9.955–9)

³⁵ Turner, *One Flesh*, p. 274.

³⁶ Barbara Lewalski, 'Milton and Idolatry', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 43 (2003), 213–232 (p. 224). Lewalski here quotes 10.145-6.

Although founded on the conjunction of Christian marriage and classical amity that Milton espoused in the divorce tracts, these words mark no happy union. In practice Adam has become over-dependent on his partner, prioritising his need for Eve as an ‘irreplaceable individual’ over his need for companionship in the abstract.³⁷ This, in turn, involves him prioritising his relationship with Eve over his relationship with God and drifting into a state of separation from the latter that is only confirmed and enacted by the pair’s expulsion from Eden.

However ‘chivalrous’ Adam’s resolution ‘to undergoe like doom’ (9.953) with his likeness might at first seem, it also highlights the inferiority of this expression of human love to ideal divine love. Far from the ‘heroic martyrdom’ that Luxon suggest it is, Adam’s decision to die *with* Eve sits in opposition to the Son’s offer to die *for* mankind, with the latter show of ‘unexempl’d love’ (3.410) reflecting the famous statement of Jesus in the Gospel of John, ‘Greater love hath no man therefore this, that a man lay downe his life for his friends’ (15.13).³⁸ Indeed, Adam’s lesser show of love is underscored and further complicated in his later attempt to cast blame away from himself onto Eve:

O Heav’n! in evil strait this day I stand
Before my Judge, either to undergoe
My self the total Crime, or to accuse
My other self, the partner of my life;
Whose failing, while her Faith to me remains,
I should conceal, and not expose to blame
By my complaint; but strict necessitie
Subdues me, and calamitous constraint
Least on my head both sin and punishment,
However insupportable, be all
Devolved; though should I hold my peace, yet thou
Wouldst easily detect what I conceale.
This woman whom thou mad’st to be my help,
And gav’st me as thy perfect gift, so good,
So fit, so acceptable, so Divine,
That from her hand I could suspect no ill,

³⁷ Turner, *One Flesh*, p. 297.

³⁸ On Adam’s chivalry see Turner, *One Flesh*, p. 297, and on his ‘heroic martyrdom’ see Luxon, p. 101. See also David Shelley Berkeley, ‘The “Mysterious” Marriage of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*’, *Philological Quarterly*, 66 (1987), 195–205 (p. 197).

And what she did, whatever in it self,
Her doing seem'd to justifie the deed;
Shee gave me of the Tree, and I did eate. (10.125–43)

Adam's wordy self-defence to the Son further contrasts the narrative quietness of the Son's earlier request to God that he be allowed to take the punishment for Adam and Eve's transgression – quiet because the momentous request is dealt with in a mere seven-word summary reported by the narrator: the Son, we are told simply, 'offerd himself to die / For mans offence' (3.409–10). Moreover, Adam's acknowledgement that 'while [Eve's] Faith to me remaines' he 'should conceal' her failing, not only devalues his original gesture of love in deciding to join Eve in her fate by eating from the Tree, but also casts an additional shadow over their relationship: as Proverbs 17.9 tells us, 'He that covereth a transgression, seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends.'

Despite the fact that Adam's problems in speaking of and practising companionship signal a prelapsarian fallenness, it is the potential for falling in Eve's self-love that has been given more attention. Luxon claims that 'unlike Adam, [Eve] was not created lonely. Eve does not suffer this constitutional lack; she is the remedy for "single imperfection." [... H]er desire is not companionship, but simply the desire to be needed and desired'.³⁹ And yet, the Book 5 description of Adam by the narrator as 'without more train / Accompani'd therefore with his own compleat / Perfections' (5.351–3) offers counter evidence of Adam's wholeness, and is particularly telling given that Adam has just sent Eve away to find food for Raphael (5.313) and so is whole without her. By contrast, if we return to Adam's account of Eve's effect on him in Book 8 – 'so absolute she seems / And in her self compleat' (8.547–8) – Eve's wholeness is less certain. Adam's wording in fact suggests his recognition that she is *not* absolute (a quality only truly belonging to God) and *not* complete, but only at times *seems* so to him because of his overwhelming love for her. Moreover, for all that she initiates separation from Adam on the morning of her temptation, at the moment of her creation Eve instinctively seeks companionship, albeit from what turns out to be her own reflection.

Discussions of Eve's pool-gazing tend to turn on the scene's allusions to the story of Narcissus: critics read these allusions either as pointing to Eve's vanity, latent or otherwise, or as indicating one of God's 'good temptations', by which Eve gains in self-

³⁹ Luxon, p. 120. See also Mandy Green, *Milton's Ovidian Eve* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 42.

understanding.⁴⁰ Moreover, where critics have noted the evidence of Adam's 'self-love' – he describes Eve as 'my Self' (8.495) – they have generally been quick to map from Eve to Adam, judging Adam equally (or more) vain, without mapping also from Adam to Eve.⁴¹ Presenting Eve's creation narrative as a prime example of *Paradise Lost's* simultaneous presentation of 'sameness and difference' in its representation of prelapsarian marriage, however, Bruce Boehrer moves us towards an additional layer of meaning.⁴² By placing Eve's desire for her reflection's 'answering looks / Of sympathie and love' (4.464–5) in the context of Adam's conception of himself and Eve as 'one Flesh, one Heart, one Soule', we are better able to see the relation of this passage to discourses of amity. Eve's relation of her encounter with her reflection and subsequent introduction to Adam, in fact, not only suggests her potential for vanity and her self-development through 'good temptation' (paralleling Adam's successful negotiation of God's companionship test on his creation); it also makes clear that she struggles as much with classical and Renaissance models of friendship as her husband does.

The nascent Eve sees in the pool what she instinctively thinks is the perfect companion, and the initial attempt by the disembodied voice of God to redirect her to Adam's image fails because, to a being not yet familiar with the concept of reflection (as distinct from the Eve who reports this scene), its words are ambiguous if not downright confusing. 'What there thou seest fair Creature is thy self' (4.468), the voice says of the image she has been looking at, and then follows that by describing Adam as 'hee / Whose image thou art' (4.471–2). Presumably bewildered, and evidently expecting at least a literal confirmation of this, Eve is not convinced by the initial physical impression Adam makes and turns back to the lake: Adam certainly does not look as 'fair, [...] winning soft [...] amiably mild' as the 'smooth watry image' (4.478–80). By contrast, Adam's winning salutation of Eve not only clarifies that theirs is a very different kind of physical bond – she is 'His flesh, his bone' (4.483) – but also reframes the issue of likeness in the incorporeal (not to mention commanding) terms that finally make her yield: 'Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim / My other half' (4.487–88). We see here a far more pliant Eve than the one who argues her case for working alone against Adam's attempted restraint of her in Book 9. Indeed, sadly, her condition here conforms

⁴⁰ See, respectively, Douglas Bush, 'Ironic and Ambiguous Allusion in *Paradise Lost*,' *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 60 (1961), 631–40 (p. 638), Maurice Kelley, *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's 'De Doctrina Christiana' as a Gloss on 'Paradise Lost'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 150 and Diane K. McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 79–80.

⁴¹ Champagne, p. 48. See also Green, p. 42, McColley, p. 83, Nyquist, p. 120 and Julia M. Walker, *Medusa's Mirrors: Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the Metamorphosis of the Female Self* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), p. 65.

⁴² Bruce Boehrer, 'Animal Love in Milton: The Case of the *Epitaphium Damonis*,' *ELH* 70 (2003), 787–811 (p. 805).

far more to seventeenth-century ideals of subservient womanhood than Diane McColley would like us to believe: Eve's hesitation can hardly be said to mark 'her discovery that her will is free'; nor does the outcome suggest that Adam 'learns in this episode to respect her freedom'.⁴³ But she does at least pass her test.

Having been thus set straight, Eve's love for Adam initially seems total; yet this presents an added problem. Like Adam's, Eve's love for her partner co-exists with a tendency to deify him. She refers to the 'Absolute rule' (4.301) of Adam's features – although, ironically, subsequent to her temptation, she blames Adam for not having been more 'absolute' in ordering her to remain with him (9.1155–56). Again, by addressing her husband with the words 'Sole' and 'Perfection' (5.28, 29), Eve is unwittingly blasphemous. This is especially notable given the similarity in rhythm of the line 'O Sole in whom my thoughts find all repose' (5.28) to God's 'O Son, in whom my Soul hath chief delight' (3.168): Eve replaces 'Son' with 'sole' (simultaneously muddling God's use of 'soul' into 'sole'), and 'chief' with 'all', which, by excluding any other object of her thoughts, implicates her as both linguistically and morally wrong. Eve's added distance from God only feeds this problem, so that James Grantham Turner might well ask, 'How [...] does the condition ascribed to Eve [in the line "Hee for God only, shee for God in him"; 4.299] differ from idolatry pure and simple: total devotion to a creature as if it embodied God?'.⁴⁴

Despite being created in God's likeness, Adam and Eve's *difference* from the godhead emerges persistently and increasingly, revealing the fractured relationship between God and Man. Likening each other to deities in their love declarations only underscores how unlike God they are, and the pair's claimed similitude to the divine thus becomes (like Satan's) dangerously presumptuous. Their progressive dissimilitude from God culminates when they fall, in the loss of their divine likeness: 'Thir Makers Image,' they are told by the Archangel Michael, 'Forsook them, when themselves they villifi'd / To serve ungovern'd appetite' (11.515–7).⁴⁵ This physical alteration enacts extant difference as well as the couple's removal from the condition of friendship with God.

The central trope of Adam and Eve's idolatry – the lover as deity – is, of course, not a new one. The courtly love tradition in particular had always kept one eye on the spiritual dangers attendant on falling in love: as William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden

⁴³ McColley, p. 82.

⁴⁴ James Grantham Turner, 'The Aesthetics of Divorce: "Masculinism," Idolatry, and Poetic Authority in *Tetrachordon* and *Paradise Lost*', in *Milton and Gender*, ed. by Catherine Gimelli Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 34–52 (p. 46).

⁴⁵ Michael's attribution of agency to the departing likeness is also suggestive of the loss of a companion.

write, 'Courtly love was charged early on with idolatry, and Adam's Fall is in this sense a medieval one'.⁴⁶ Yet what is most striking is Adam and Eve's use of such language *before* the Fall: language here expresses something already problematic, so that the issue no longer seems to be whether there is a 'natural language' that is at odds with fallen usage, or 'a fall *into* language' that exposes the 'possibility that language may not be "natural" at all'.⁴⁷ Mutual idolatry, then, not only brings Adam and Eve into conflict with God, but in itself marks their extant and inevitable separation from him.⁴⁸

Indeed, Adam and Eve's love-talk, as well as Adam's early attempts to define his wished-for mate, suggests that language enacts the difficulties inherent in attempting to determine companionship's nature and meaning, and in translating any theory of companionship into performance. How should Adam negotiate a relationship with someone like himself, but not actually the same – be that someone God or Eve? How should Eve negotiate her status as both an individual and a 'part' of Adam? No longer physically a part of Adam, her being apart from him while he continues his discourse with Raphael cultivates a further, mental separation from her husband, and is taken by Eve as evidence that she can safely be apart from him physically. Subsequently, caught up in the failures of communication between husband and wife that characterise their conversation on the morning of her temptation (signifying continued mental separation), Eve encourages the physical apartness that leaves her open to the approach of the serpent. In fact, the more Adam and Eve try to negotiate and define their relationships to each other and themselves, the more their language betrays confusion and even fundamental error. Ferry, therefore, is wrong to assert, 'We know we are to approve Adam's unfallen speech',⁴⁹ since Milton's representation of the Edenic pairing indicates a quality inherent in the marital relationship – a 'unitie defective' – that involves a division from God, and is enacted linguistically prior to the Fall.

Despite being divinely-sanctioned, then, the marital relationship in *Paradise Lost* is prioritised at the expense of the divinely-ordained spiritual community. In this, Adam and Eve's representation conflicts with the balance of earthly and spiritual love espoused in *De Doctrina Christiana*: 'a man's charity towards himself is what makes him love himself next to God, and seek his own temporal and eternal good'.⁵⁰ In this

⁴⁶ William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden, 'Milton's Coy Eve: *Paradise Lost* and Renaissance Love Poetry', *ELH* 53 (1986), 27–51 (p. 48).

⁴⁷ See, respectively, John Leonard, *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 199 and Ferguson, pp. 129, 138.

⁴⁸ On the prior closeness of Adam and God, see Douglas Anderson, 'Unfallen Marriage and the Fallen Imagination in *Paradise Lost*.' *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 26 (1986), 125–44 (p. 133.)

⁴⁹ Ferry, p. 118.

⁵⁰ *De Doctrina Christiana*, in *The Complete Prose Works*, Vol. 6, ed. by Kelley, Bk 2, Ch. 8, p. 719.

ideal scheme, self-love and love of others should never be absolute, always taking second place to love of God. Yet Genesis 2.24 instructs that ‘a man [should] leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife,’ and in this instance – as well as, in Christian terms, in the case of all spiritually- and biologically-fathered men since – the Father is God.⁵¹ Indeed, by his very creation of Eve, Milton’s God could be said to provide the wedge that is driven between him and Adam, and the conditions for increasing (and inevitable) disharmony that will lead to the Fall. Far from ‘Lead[ing] up to Heav’n’ (8.613), the love between man and wife seems rather to obstruct, or lead off, the path – quite literally on the morning of Eve’s temptation. Milton’s poetical version of paradisaical union, therefore, goes much further than simply to test the companionate marriage model: it locates companionship’s problems – and in particular the irresolvably competing demands of spiritual and earthly companionship – at the heart of the Fall of Man.

In placing the divorce tracts’ ideals under the strain of the particular problems faced by the first man and his rib-wife, therefore, Milton’s epic also gestures towards the problems inherent in practising companionship at all within a Christian framework: each earthly and spiritual claim seems to entail its prioritisation over other relationships. So, on the one hand, we can say that Adam passes his test when he prioritises his more inclusive, God-ordained ‘conversation’ with Eve over the amity model offered by Raphael; yet, as Adam’s prioritisation of Eve takes hold, idolatry emerges that brings this relationship into conflict with ‘the prime end / Of Nature’ (8.540–1) and entails his severance from God. In dramatising God and man’s and Adam and Eve’s relationships as competing models of companionship, *Paradise Lost* also registers an unmistakably Protestant anxiety about the impact of human relationships on man’s personal and intimate relationship with God (embodied in the idea of the priesthood of all believers), and, more broadly, the impact of individual will on spiritual community.

The poem’s powerful final image encapsulates not only the opposition between marital companionship and companionship with God, but also the disharmonious state of the ‘wedded pair’ that not even their idolatrous love-talk can conceal: Adam and Eve ‘hand in hand with wandring steps and slow, / Through *Eden* took their solitarie way’ (12.648–9). Olmsted summarises that ‘[t]hey are “solitary” because unable to converse face-to-face with angels and God, but “hand in hand,” as they keep company in mutual help’.⁵² However, the ambiguity and placement of these lines point rather to the

⁵¹ Anderson highlights how Milton’s description of Adam’s creation is suggestive of childbirth, suggesting Adam as a new-born child and God as a figure that is at once actual creator, spiritual father and metaphorical mother. See p. 134.

⁵² Olmsted, p. 207.

couple's state of concurrent physical attachment and spiritual disunion in relation to each other, and their spiritual and physical separation from God and the wider spiritual community. Rather than 'reintegrat[ing] solitude and company in the married relationship',⁵³ the ending of *Paradise Lost* underscores the lack of togetherness of man and wife as well as of man and God: both heavenly and earthly forms of community have broken down. Adam and Eve may have rejoined their hands physically, but the metaphorical and literal unhanding in Book 9 hangs over the image of their expulsion: too much has passed to demonstrate that these two are not 'one Soule' for their postlapsarian hand-holding to offer more than an empty echo of the companionship ideal that was at once divinely-ordained and doomed from its conception.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 207.