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“Nature gave a second groan”: The Decay of Nature in *Paradise Lost* and  
Seventeenth-Century Discussion

by

Mary Grace Elliott

Under the Direction of Dr. Stephen Dobranski

Abstract

The thesis investigates the role of nature in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. By looking at seventeenth-century texts concerning the decay of nature by Godfrey Goodman and George Hakewill, this thesis strives to determine how Milton’s poetry engaged in a contemporary debate. The thesis begins with an examination of Goodman and Hakewill’s texts alongside Milton’s *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity*, *Naturam Non Pati Senium*, and *Lycidas*. The second and third parts of the thesis examine the role of nature in pre- and postlapsarian Eden in Milton’s epic, while keeping in mind the seventeenth-century debate explored in the first section.

Index Words: Milton, Goodman, Hakewill, Nature, Decay, *Paradise Lost*

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Seventeenth-Century Discussion

by

Mary Grace Elliott

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2013

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2013

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Seventeenth-Century Discussion

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May 2013

Dedication

For Jeannie, Sip-n-Dip and Milton: what a combination.

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Thanks to Dr. Dobranski for his invaluable help and patience. I'm still not sure how I did this. Thanks also to Dr. Richtarik for all of her guidance and support.

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1 That “Nature in generall is much corrupted”: An Introduction to Milton’s Use of Nature in *Paradise Lost*

The natural world depicted by John Milton, particularly in the Eden of *Paradise Lost* (1674), has long been a point of interest for scholars. The garden itself—to be specific, its trees, flowers, and other plant life—has inspired many books and essays. One essay by Kathleen Swaim deals with Eve’s metaphorical relationship with flowers and the mirroring of Eve’s personal growth with a flower’s biological lifespan. Other works by John Dixon Hunt, Stanley Koehler, and Charlotte F. Otten concentrate on the relationship between the poem and English gardens, both in Milton’s day and in later centuries—specifically the ways in which the poem was influenced by earlier gardens and, in turn, itself influenced later gardens. More recently, works by Diane McColley, Karen L. Edwards, and Ken Hiltner have addressed Milton’s portrayal of nature as it relates to ecocriticism. Few scholars, however, address the role of a personified nature, not simply as setting or metaphor, but as an active participant in the narrative of the poem.

As early as *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* (1629), Milton personifies a fallen, lustful nature. When nature learns of the coming of Christ,

Nature in awe to him  
 Had doffed her gaudy trim,  
       With her great master so to sympathize:  
 It was no season then for her  
 To wanton in the sun with her lusty paramour. (32-36)

Not only does this passage depict nature possessed of human sensibilities such as pride (as indicated by her “gaudy trim”) and sympathy, but nature also appears to be capable of sin. Words such as “wanton,” “lusty,” and “paramour” imply a sinful sensuality. Although the word “wanton” is employed as an adjective in *Paradise Lost* to describe the curl of Eve’s hair and illustrate the innocence of Adam and Eve’s Edenic prelapsarian existence (*Paradise Lost* IV.304), its predicate form in the Nativity Ode, especially in conjunction with “lusty” and “paramour,” indicates that nature’s motive to feel shame in the following lines, “to hide her guilty front with innocent snow” (39), comes from a sinful relationship with the sun.

Nature’s ability to sin also is manifested in *Paradise Lost* when, as Adam and Eve taste the fruit and fall, “nature gave a second groan, / Sky loured, and muttering thunder, some sad drops / Wept at completing of mortal sin” (9.1001-03). On the one hand, the passage contains a pathetic fallacy, with the storm symbolizing the gravity of Adam and Eve’s action; on the other hand, nature’s response to mortal sin indicates a schism in the relationship between Adam and Eve and the plants in Eden. Before this moment, Adam and Eve had tended to the plants, and the plants actively reciprocated. For example, when a prelapsarian Adam and Eve eat supper, it is a supper of fruits “which the compliant boughs / Yielded them” (4.332-33). This “compliant” nature contrasts dramatically with postlapsarian Adam’s demand of the pines to “cover me” (9.1087). This command demonstrates the change from a reciprocal to a hierarchical relationship between humans and nature. In my thesis, I aim to explore this postlapsarian shift and its relation to seventeenth-century ideas about the role of nature in God’s creation. More specifically, I will investigate the shifts in the plant-human dynamic in *Paradise Lost* and how those shifts demonstrate Milton’s maturing ideas regarding humanity and the natural world.

The historical context for such an argument comes from a prominent seventeenth-century debate. In *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell*, Diane McColley points out that just as today's society harbors concerns about pollution and global warming, "Seventeenth-century England had the same 'environmental' problems we have today [including] deforestation, air pollution, confinement of rivers and streams, draining of wetlands, overbuilding" (2). Ken Hiltner in *Milton and Ecology* also emphasizes that during the early modern period "massive ecological upheavals fueled public debate" (2). One specific environmental controversy of which Milton was likely aware focused on whether nature was in a state of decay (Kerrigan, Rumrich, and Fallon 215). Two writers, Godfrey Goodman and George Hakewill, offered alternative positions. Goodman, in *The Fall of Man or the Corruption of Nature* (1616), asserts that "nature in generall is much corrupted; which doth more argue the corruption of man in particular, being that whole nature is directed to man" (B7v).<sup>1</sup> This quotation is especially meaningful, firstly, because Goodman suggests that nature is in a state of decay. Secondly, the claim that the decay of nature "doth more argue" the decay of man implies a correspondence or correlation between humankind and nature. Estelle Haan further explains this relationship in "Milton's *Naturam Non Pati Senium* and Hakewill," citing the use of the word *nature* as an umbrella term in *The Fall of Man* for all of God's creation—plants, animals, minerals, people, cosmos, etc. (149). Finally, Goodman's assertion that "whole nature is directed to man" connects Original Sin—what Goodman calls "the corruption of man"—with the steady corruption of "nature in general." He seems to indicate that the natural world continues to take its behavioral cues from

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<sup>1</sup> For all quotations from Goodman and Hakewill, I have not changed any spelling or punctuation, but I have regularized the use of interchangeable letters: s, i, j, u, and v are now fixed.

humankind's actions. Milton's Raphael tells Adam that if he and Eve remain faithful, "Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit, / Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend / Ethereal" (*Paradise Lost* 5.497-99). This statement suggests that, at least before the Fall, true faith can lead to an improvement of ontological status. While Raphael's words arguably only apply to a time before sin entered the world, Goodman seems to concentrate on a failure by humankind to live up to such a standard of obedience and faithfulness in the time since the Fall, as if a promise of ontological improvement through the resistance of sin still applies after the Fall. Goodman instead sees the evidence around him of nature's corruption—and, more specifically, its ongoing, exponential deterioration—as an indication of humankind's continuing sinfulness.

George Hakewill, however, in *An Apologie of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* (1627), dismisses Goodman's views as "erroneous" (B2r) and argues that nature is "indued with a *divine and aeternall youth*" (R3v). This is to say that nature, from *flora* and *fauna* to all of creation, is divinely and perfectly of God, and therefore unable to err toward decay. Hakewill understands God's creation, or the world, to be of an "order that in fact renders corruption wholly impossible" (Haan 150). Hakewill calmly brushes off Goodman's concerns that "the heavens, and the earth, seeme to conspire the one against the other" (Goodman B8r), and insists that "that the same complaint hath been . . . since *Salomons* time . . . By which it seemes, the weather was even then as uncertaine as now; and so was likewise the uncertaine and unkindely riping of fruites" (Hakewill R2r). Emphasizing both a perfect creation and historical precedence, Hakewill does not offer an alternative explanation of the various environmental changes perceived by other seventeenth-century writers, but instead trusts simply in faith, as did the faithful figures in the Bible.

Milton, of course, as a devout Christian, emphasized the need for faith. In his *Christian Doctrine*, for example, he defines his personal theology as “FAITH, or KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and LOVE, or THE WORSHIP OF GOD” (128). Whereas Hakewill seems to stress blind faith, indicating a lack of knowledge of God, Milton defines faith as knowledge. Milton does not claim to know the intimate designs of God, but he does advocate “that all sorts and conditions of men should read [the scriptures] or hear them read regularly” as “they are an ideal instrument for educating . . . in those matters which have most to do with salvation” (577, 578-79). This is faith for Milton: educating oneself as far as the scriptures can provide and trusting in God to concern himself with what is unknown beyond that. Thus Raphael instructs Adam not to push too far in his questioning: “Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid, / Leave them to God above, him serve and fear” (*Paradise Lost* 8.167-68). It is perfectly acceptable, even encouraged, for Adam to wonder about the world and ask questions, but for Milton, there is an ultimate limit to human knowledge. This reserved pursuit of knowledge, coupled with patience in the unknown, is faith, and would seem to ally the poet more closely with Hakewill than Goodman.

Further evidence of Milton’s possible agreement with Hakewill’s argument is demonstrated in one of Milton’s early poems, *Naturam non pati senium* (1627-32?): “No! The Almighty Father has taken thought for the universe, and set the stars more firmly in their place” (33-36).<sup>2</sup> By emphasizing the fixed quality of the cosmos, Milton seems to be asserting, like

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<sup>2</sup> The dating of this poem is uncertain. If Milton was referencing the first edition of Hakewill’s *Apologie*, *Naturam* could have been composed as early as 1627, the year of Hakewill’s publication. However, if Milton used Hakewill’s second edition, the poem might have been written in 1630 or later (Carey 63-64).

Hakewill, that God's design is without flaw. However, by including nature in the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, and by having God punish it along with the human characters, Milton also seems to accept Goodman's idea that nature is fallen. Instead of aligning himself solidly with either position, Milton moves beyond the two schools of thought, providing an opportunity for the redemption of humankind independent from fallen nature. As David Quint asserts, Milton was attempting to create "a purified poetry" that is distinct from the poetry of the past (195). Quint's discussion also suggests that this purification includes a new way of thinking theologically and philosophically, allowing for comparisons of Milton's ideas with those of seventeenth-century scholars. Evidence of this "purified" poetry is seen in *Paradise Lost* when Raphael implies the possibility of Adam and Eve's upward mobility on an ontological scale (5.497-99). Raphael's words demonstrate the mutability of creation by detailing how human beings can transcend to higher levels of being. However, the poem does not seem concerned with the mutability of plants, nor the unjust punishment of nature after the Fall. Rather, the poem suggests, perhaps, that humanity and nature are not so closely intertwined as Goodman suggests. Instead, according to Milton, a decay in nature is not an indication of humankind's decline. This passage demonstrates Milton's ability to move beyond the constraints of the seventeenth-century argument. Instead of looking for direct correlation between humankind and plants, Milton focuses on the part of God's creation with free-will and agency for change—humans—by concentrating on human faith as an indicator for God's satisfaction rather than the wilting of plants. Likewise, in the Nativity Ode, the verse, "Our great redemption from above did bring," suggests a new hope for humanity through Christ's arrival, while nature seems to play the simpler role of reflecting human emotion through pathetic fallacy. But by the time Milton arrives at *Paradise Lost*, fallen nature's state is no longer

dependent on human goodness or sinfulness, showing that humans should not use the state of plants as a barometer for their behavior, as Goodman might suggest (4).

Often critics have emphasized the restoration of nature in Milton's early poem, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, which focuses on the redemptive power of Christ. Quint and George William Smith, Jr., for example, concentrate on the significance of Christ's arrival for both nature and humankind—as Quint puts it, “the restoration of a sinful nature and humanity to their original purity” (195). Whereas Milton sets up a human-centered universe in *Paradise Lost*, he seems, in his early poetry, to be more concerned with the actions of the natural world. In the ode, for example, Christ not only brings salvation to humanity, but, as Smith puts it, he corrects the mistakes of “personified Nature, Stars, and Sun” (107). Smith elaborates upon this idea by stating that nature's efforts to redeem itself through a covering of “innocent snow” demonstrates the widely-held early modern belief “that Nature shares in man's corruption” (111).

Discussing nature in *Paradise Lost*, other critics have made observations that similarly recall the seventeenth-century debate on nature's decay. Ken Hiltner, for example, “greenly” describes Eve's Fall as her “attempt to pull *away from* the Earth,” that is, to disconnect from the natural world by eating the fruit and changing her ontological role (3). Eve's actions, Hiltner argues, result in the “ecological devastation” of the Earth, leaving a chasm between herself and the natural world (5). Natural consequences of Original Sin, as examined by Goodman and Hakewill, are also explored by Karen Edwards in *Milton and the Natural World*. Edwards notes the stark differences in the postlapsarian and prelapsarian worlds, especially how “The light is different (and most likely the temperature)” (199). Edwards illustrates this difference not by simply comparing and contrasting descriptions of the garden in Books IV and X, but by noting subtle changes in diction such as a more sinister use of the words “embalmed” and “sacred” after

the Fall (199-200). In addition to addressing these physical and semantic changes, Edwards emphasizes Adam's inability after the Fall to "read the sun and the fair earth" with the same ease as in the prelapsarian world—that is, to apprehend and appreciate his natural surroundings effortlessly (200). Because of this new postlapsarian schism between humans and nature, Adam and Eve must "learn to read fallen creatures" (200) and address their sudden illiteracy:

Beast now with beast gan war, and fowl with fowl,  
 And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,  
 Devoured each other; nor stood much in awe  
 Of man, but fled him. (*Paradise Lost* X.710-13)

Whereas Adam and Eve were once readily able to interact with and understand their natural surroundings, the new fallen world is harsh and unfamiliar. Just as Adam and Eve can still garden after the Fall but now must sweat and struggle, so the couple can still interpret natural signs, as I will discuss in Section 4, but those signs now carry ominous meanings and their interpretation requires more effort.

This effort further supports Hiltner's point that Eve's sin is a pulling "*away from the Earth*" and creating a void synonymous with ecological devastation between humans and nature. Hiltner notes that the wound created in the earth when Eve eats the forbidden fruit is unusual and "not caused by something striking *at* the Earth, like a fist or spear, but instead something struck *from* the Earth" (4). Hiltner uses the metaphor of a tree uprooting itself and falling over, leaving a hole where it used to stand, to illustrate the consequences of Eve's action. By accessing logic, Eve is changing her ontological status—but not in the smooth manner Raphael suggested over dinner in Book 5. Taking for granted that all of creation is connected like the components of Raphael's metaphorical flower, for Eve to rip herself out of the chain of being by disobeying



God and accessing logic, all of creation must suffer her loss, just, as Hiltner suggests, as the earth would suffer a gaping hole were a tree to fall over. After all, when Adam and Eve eat the fruit, the Earth physically responds with earthquakes (*Paradise Lost* 9.780-84, 9.1000-02), natural disasters that suggest seventeenth-century fears of nature's decay.

Considering that Milton's opinions on the fall of nature can only be derived from a close reading of his poetry and prose, the critical approach for this project is primarily a formalist one, as I analyze the pertinent texts of Milton, Goodman, and Hakewill. I also borrow from New Historicism in that I am reading *Paradise Lost* in relation to traditionally non-canonical texts and attempting to piece together the poem's cultural and historical context. Moreover, I am comparatively examining the depictions of nature in some of Milton's earlier works, such as *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, *Naturam non pati senium*, and *Lycidas*. I have demonstrated the importance of the first two of these poems earlier in this introduction, but I think it important also to discuss *Lycidas*, as this pastoral elegy is quite different in form and length than the other works I am examining and was written in the middle of Milton's poetic career, after the Nativity Ode and *Naturam*, but before *Paradise Lost*. When discussing these earlier works, I do not focus particularly on plants, as they are not necessarily the best example of fallen nature in all of Milton's poems. Instead, I treat nature as non-human forms of creation in keeping with Goodman and Hakewill's definitions.

The first section following this introduction (Section 2) places Milton's depiction of nature into historical context. I begin by thoroughly discussing the arguments of both Goodman and Hakewill and their relevance to Milton. Having established these two authors' ideas about the role of nature in the world and in theology, I then analyze Milton's early depictions of nature in the Nativity Ode, *Naturam*, and *Lycidas* through this contemporary lens of nature's decay.

The second section (Section 3) concentrates on nature and Adam and Eve in a prelapsarian Eden. Examples of Adam and Eve's cultivation of the plants ("...our delightful task / To prune these growing plants, and tend these flowers" [4.437-38]) and the plants' devotion to their gardeners ("Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs / Yielded them" [4.332-33]) illustrates the close and reciprocal relationship between the humans and the garden. I argue in this section that Adam and Eve are duty-bound as well as emotionally invested in cultivation of the garden, motivations that encourage the humans and the plants to live in concert with one another.

Synthesizing the first and second sections, the third (Section 4) addresses the postlapsarian relationship between humans and plants. Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, and nature repeatedly responds to the couple's sin. When Eve eats, for example, "Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat / ... gave signs of woe" (9.782-83), and when Adam eats, "Nature gave a second groan" (9.1001). The immediate physical reactions of the earth, followed by the loss of the symbiotic relationship between humans and plants, are explored in this final section. I focus on the reasons for an emotional severance between humans and the natural world and the lasting effects of such a schism. Milton's depiction of a postlapsarian world demonstrates a departure from the ideas of Goodman and Hakewill and most fully illustrates Milton's own philosophies about the role of humankind in creation.

## 2 Milton's Preliminary Stance: Goodman and Hakewill in Conversation with Milton's University Poems

From his earliest poems, John Milton created works that stand out among those of his contemporaries. *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* is both longer and more involved than other nativity poems of the time, *Naturam non pati senium* arguably joins an argument put forth by two established authors while Milton was still at Cambridge, and *Lycidas* was the last and longest poem included in the memorial volume created to honor the life of Edward King, a fellow of Milton's college. In all three of these very different works, Milton interacts on a philosophical level with a popular theological discussion of the day: the question of nature's decay. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon, co-editors of *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, mention this theological controversy in their introduction to Milton's Latin poem *Naturam non pati senium* (*That Nature does not suffer from old age*), calling the question of nature's decay "an important seventeenth-century debate" (215). In 1616, Godfrey Goodman, in *The Fall of Man or the Corruption of Nature*, argued that nature was in a state of decay (Haan 149); George Hakewill then attempted to refute Goodman's views eleven years later in his *An Apologie of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World*. Given the critical consensus that the works of Hakewill and Goodman were known to Milton, I wish to examine how readings of these texts might specifically inform Milton's poetry and provide a context for his own depictions of nature.<sup>3</sup>

Both Godfrey Goodman (1583-1656) and George Hakewill (1578-1649) were officials of the Church of England. Goodman served as the Bishop of Gloucester from 1624 until his death,

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<sup>3</sup> For the scholarly consensus on Goodman and Hakewill's relevance, see Carey (64), Haan (150-52), and McCullough.

and Hakewill was a lower-ranked clergyman. While both men served in religious vocations, their theologies could hardly have been more opposite. At a time in English history when a return to Catholicism was greatly feared, Goodman's "increasingly sacramentalist views" garnered him much criticism, even leading to his being censured before the House of Commons for "preaching five points of popery before the king" (Cranfield). Contemporaries thought Goodman to "have been actively seeking to be reconciled privately to the Catholic church," and his biographer does not hesitate to describe him as "lavish," a portrayal that is hardly surprising to readers of Goodman's flowery prose (Cranfield). Further evidence of Goodman's Catholic leanings and tendency towards the extravagant can be inferred from his post as priest to the house of Queen Anne, herself a converted Catholic, and the person to whom *The Fall of Man or the Corruption of Nature* is dedicated (Meikle and Payne).

While also a clergyman and author, Hakewill was a vehement Calvinist. Like Goodman, Hakewill served the monarchy in a religious capacity; he was hired as a young man to accompany the prince of England throughout Europe and "protect him from any influence of Roman Catholicism." This task led to Hakewill's enthusiasm for and strict adherence to Calvinist practices throughout his life (McCullough). But whereas Goodman enjoyed the power of a high Church office, Hakewill instead lived off of his own private wealth while producing a considerable amount of writing. This difference illustrates perhaps the starkest contrast between the two contemporaries: their differing pursuits of Christianity and, therefore, their differing lifestyles. While Goodman participated in courtly life, poured public funds into his parish, and was repeatedly accused of private and not-so-private Catholicism, Hakewill lived quietly, apparently devoting his life to study.

Estelle Haan is one of the few contemporary Milton scholars who has spent time studying Goodman and Hakewill. In her essay “Milton’s *Naturam non Pati Senium* and Hakewill,” she contextualizes the two men’s arguments about nature’s decay. Haan asserts that, like Goodman, many seventeenth-century “philosophers, astronomers, and *literati* alike were insisting that humans, their natural surroundings, and the entire macrocosm were on a downward path toward disintegration and dissolution” (149). While Haan’s essay, as the title suggests, mainly concentrates on the specifics of Milton’s *Naturam*, she also emphasizes his knowledge of Goodman’s and Hakewill’s works. Because Hakewill’s argument responded directly to Goodman’s, it can be inferred that to know of Hakewill was to know of Goodman. The first edition of Hakewill’s *Apologie* was published in 1627, two years before Milton composed his Nativity Ode. Haan suggests that Hakewill’s book may have even “[provided] the theme for the commencement” at Cambridge in 1628 that Milton attended (151), an idea that William A. Sessions has agreed is a possibility (53). This opinion derives from a letter written by Milton to Alexander Gill on 2 July 1628, wherein Milton refers to poems he has enclosed that he composed for “this academic assembly” (Milton, “To Alexander Gill” 768). The “academic assembly” taking place the previous day would have been commencement, and it is thought by various scholars that the enclosed poems included *Naturam* (Kerrigan, Rumrich, and Fallon 768).

However, Haan also concedes that Milton may have instead encountered Hakewill’s argument in the second edition of *An Apologie*, which appeared in 1630. Haan points to a passage in that edition which mentions Theodore Diodati, the father of Milton’s closest boyhood friend (151). If this second volume is the one with which Milton was familiar, then his depiction of nature in 1629’s Nativity Ode was not in direct conversation with Hakewill—although the similarities and differences found in the words of Hakewill, Goodman, and Milton would still encourage

a comparative analysis. Of course, Milton might have seen both editions of Hakewill's text. According to Hakewill's biographer, P. E. McCullough, Hakewill's works were quite popular, and McCullough goes so far as to list Hakewill among the "literary giants" of the seventeenth century "who had influenced Dr Samuel Johnson's prose style." The fame of Hakewill's work during his own time and the power of Goodman's ecclesiastical post suggest that a bright young student at Cambridge might have been aware of their discussions.

Goodman forcefully states in the beginning of his tract that "nature in generall is much corrupted; which doth more argue the corruption of man in particular, being that whole is directed to man" (B7v). But before he avers that all of nature—including humankind—is corrupted, Goodman shows readers his flair for the dramatic by declaring,

for when I observe the course of things, the severall actions and inclinations of men; when I consider the diseases of these times, together with all the signes, tokens, and symptomes; alas, alas, I feare a relapse, I fear a relapse, lest the world in her old doting age, should now again turn infidell, and that the end of us be worse then the beginning. (B2r)

The repetition in these lines sounds overwrought and overly anxious. Yet Goodman's emphasis on the "actions and inclinations of men" and "the disease of these times" reveals what he considers to be the root of the problem: Goodman fears that the sin of humankind in the world is causing the decay of nature and will ultimately lead to the apocalypse, perhaps even a second fall, as suggested by his language, "a relapse, I feare a relapse."

Goodman's evidence for this theory comes from his own observations of the world. He asserts that "the severall parts of nature; the heavens, and the earth, seeme to conspire the one against the other" through a betrayal of the sun (B8r-v). Because the weather is cold more often

than it is warm, for example, Goodman senses a decline of nature from perfection. Furthermore, Goodman notices that “signes, miracles and prophecies have ceased, which were wont to be the seales for the confirmation of the truth,” and he argues that humankind has strayed far from the example set to them in the stories of the Bible (B4v). Ultimately, Goodman blames the noticeable decline of his time on the idea that “there is onely one fountaine, from whence whole nature proceeds; and that the fountaine onely of good, without any mixture of evill: certainly this malignitie of nature, proceeds . . . after accidentall corruption” (B7v). Here, Goodman is suggesting not only that the decay of nature proceeds from sin, but also that the sin in question is not created by God, that it is not part of the original “fountaine” of creation. Instead, corruption is “accidentall,” a word that indicates the possible fallibility of nature’s perfection and may also imply the Aristotelian idea of accidents—that is, sin represents a non-essential additive to creation. This argument leads to the (heretical, according to Hakewill) fear that God is perhaps not in control of all creation.

Turning to Hakewill, we find the almost opposite point of view. Hakewill vehemently argues that Goodman’s ideas are “erroneous” (B2r) and insists that God’s creation *is* perfect. As Haan explains, Hakewill’s concept of the world is one of “order that in fact renders corruption wholly impossible” (150). In other words, Hakewill cannot accept Goodman’s theory of decay because it implies that, contrary to God’s law, creation as a whole was fallible. As for Goodman’s evidence, Hakewill insists,

I am well assured that these pretended causes are farre from truth, it being a peece of impiety so much as once to imagine that nature (which the first founder of the world blessed with perpetuall fruitfulness) is affected with barrenness, as a kind of disease, neither is it the part of a wise man to think that the Earth, (which being

indued with a *divine and aternall youth*, is deservedly tearmed the *Common Parent* of all things, inasmuch as it both doth and hereafter shall bring all things forth) is now *waxen old like a man*, so as that which hath befallne us I should rather impute it to our owne *default* then to the *unseasonableness* of the weather. (R3v)

Hakewill dismisses Goodman's examples of drought and changes in weather as the complaints of a spoiled child. He points to the promise of the creator that the earth, the "*Common Parent*," will provide for the rest of creation. Hakewill, a Calvinist, would have presumably believed strictly in the words of scripture and might thus have thought it necessary to refute Goodman's argument line by line. Instead, he merely reminds his readers of God's supposed perfection, and, putting his opponent to shame, points out the audacity and the lack of wisdom of a person who would argue imperfection in God's creation. This very idea, that God has made a perfect creation in which nature cannot be corrupted, is the one that both Sessions and Haan suggest could have inspired the Cambridge commencement in 1628.

Milton composed *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* in 1629, according to the date printed with the title in Milton's 1645 *Poems*. It was the first verse printed in both the 1645 and 1673 editions of Milton's collected poetry, which perhaps signifies its importance to Milton (Kerrigan, Rumrich, and Fallon 18). By setting it first in both collections, Milton and his publishers indicate that the ideas put forth in the poem are serious, important, and enduring—at least for the half of a century in which it was twice published.

Although for the purpose of discussing *Paradise Lost* I have defined nature as plant life, *flora*, I wish to focus on a more holistic definition of nature in the *Nativity Ode* and *Naturam* because Milton in these earlier works seems concerned with creation as a whole—plants, humans, earth, air, and cosmos. When first looking at this broader depiction of nature in the *Nativity Ode*,



one might notice some similarities to the ideas of Goodman (whose own definition of nature encompasses creation in its totality). Milton begins the Hymn with “the winter wild” (29). Winter, with its marked differences from spring, summer, and fall, is the season that Goodman found indicative of his theory of nature’s decay. Milton goes further than simply assigning a season to characterize nature: he personifies it as an ashamed woman who has to “hide her guilty front with innocent snow” (39). This depiction also serves as a pathetic fallacy, wherein nature seems to respond sympathetically to the Christ child’s physical state as he lies cold in a humble manger. The poem, in fact, insists on the relationship between nature and the baby Christ with the lines, “Nature in awe to him / Had doffed her gaudy trim / With her great master so to sympathize” (32-34). According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, “sympathize” could mean “to have an affinity” (2.a). Thus nature’s abjection both underlines Christ’s lowly birth and indicates a connection—whether literal or metaphorical—between Christ (a human, at least in part) and nature.

The Hymn’s fifth stanza begins to illustrate the soothing of nature. Once Christ has come into the world and God has “Sent down meek-eyed Peace” (46), the previous “wild winter” grows calm (29). This “peace upon the earth” (63) seems to change everything in creation, not simply the old pagan gods. Leaving behind the broader idea of seasons, Milton now addresses the winds and oceans:

The Winds with wonder whist,  
Smoothly the waters kissed,  
Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,  
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,  
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave. (64-68)

The first notable aspect of this passage is that both “Winds” and “Ocean” are personified. The Winds are able to feel wonder and the Ocean has the ability to forget. The Winds are also soothing the Ocean like a lover, as indicated by the words “kissing” and “whispered,” which, used in conjunction with “joys,” create an affectionate tone. The Winds manage to convince the Ocean not to “rave,” which is to say, “to show signs of madness or delirium,” a possible indication of nature’s decline or “disease,” as Goodman put it (*OED* 1.a). Yet, that the Winds and Ocean work thus together to please “the Prince of Light” (62) directly contrasts Goodman’s assertion that “the heavens, and the earth, seeme to conspire the one against the other,” one of the crucial pieces of evidence for his thesis that nature is declining (B8r-v). Milton uses language that evokes Goodman’s idea of a personal connection between the different aspects of nature, but, by having peace be achieved through this connection, Milton demonstrates how he does not accept Goodman’s larger argument.

Milton’s correction of Goodman’s idea concerning how different components of nature interact is also reflected in Christ’s subsequent correction of the old gods. George William Smith, Jr., in his essay “Milton’s Method of Mistakes in the Nativity Ode,” comments on the way Milton sets up a “pattern of mistake then correction” (107). In discussing the personification and redemption of nature, Smith provides a few insights that relate to Hakewill and Goodman. Smith emphasizes nature’s rejection of redemption when she covers herself in snow “To hide her guilty front” (39). This act of covering (reminding us of Adam and Eve’s futile attempts to cover their naked forms in post-lapsarian Eden) indicates a desire to avoid the coming judgment of Christ. Smith adds that the second, successful instance of nature’s encountering an opportunity for redemption—the reconciliation between the Wind and the Ocean—serves as Milton’s correction of nature’s mistake (111). By showing the Winds and the Ocean in loving cooperation with

one another, Milton suggests the failure of nature's first attempt at simply hiding herself beneath the snow. In other words, like Adam and Eve's attempt to obscure their naked bodies after the Fall, nature's evasion of her crimes in the Nativity Ode does not offer her any real escape from judgment.

Smith's reading represents one way that the philosophies of Goodman, Hakewill, and Milton can be allied. As we have seen, Goodman writes that all of nature, all of creation is in decline due to error outside of God's control. In other words, he suggests that God's creation is not, in fact, perfect and infallible, whereas Hakewill argues that creation can never decay simply because of God's undeniable perfection. Milton, in *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, seems to fall somewhere between these two positions. Clearly, Milton acknowledges a decline in nature, perhaps beginning from Adam and Eve's disobedience of God and subsequent banishment from the Garden of Eden. The poem mentions both a need to "redeem our loss" (153) and a "deadly forfeit" (6), two phrases that suggest natural decay in the Nativity Ode is a consequence of humankind's misdeed. However, Milton's concept of this punishment differs drastically from Goodman's view. While Goodman removes God's agency in the natural consequences of the Fall, in that he suggests that sin came into the world through "accidentall corruption" (B7v), God in Milton's poems controls his own designation of retribution by punishing the natural world. Christ's arrival is a remedy for these natural consequences, an indication that Milton might lean closer to Hakewill's interpretation of God. As a Calvinist, Hakewill would have believed in predestination, presumably eliminating the possibility of "accidentall corruption." While Milton in his later work cleanly breaks from Calvinism, the God in his Nativity Ode more closely resembles Hakewill's version: a deity aware of all the cycles of nature who would not allow decay to occur accidentally.

One of the noted themes of the Nativity Ode is the writing of wrongs, demonstrated previously by the reaction of nature at the arrival of Christ, the catalogued banishment of the false gods, and the peaceful calm that permeates the world in the middle section of the poem. In the first stanza Milton indicates that the two purposes for the coming of Christ are recovery and peace:

Our great redemption from above did bring;  
 For so the holy sages once did sing,  
     That he our deadly forfeit should release,  
 And with his Father work us a perpetual peace. (4-7)

“Redemption” means “the action of saving, delivering, or restoring a person or thing,” but it can also mean “expiation or atonement for a crime, sin, or offence; release from punishment” (*OED* 5.a, 3.a). This second definition is significant in that simply the word *redemption* implies a justly deserved punishment. When this definition is applied to the poem, humanity is impacted by the Christ child because his arrival signals the end of the *world's* punishment stemming from Adam and Eve’s act of disobedience. “Forfeit,” meaning “a misdeed, crime, offence, transgression,” builds on this idea (*OED* 1). The speaker here, representative of all humankind as the inclusive word “our” suggests, admits that a “deadly” crime has been committed, hinting most likely at the fall from the Garden of Eden which resulted in the mortality of humankind (and suggestively the world).<sup>4</sup> God will forgive and remove the crimes of the world when the world is redeemed. However, while humankind is offered full redemption, nature, as a lesser part of creation, is merely offered the chance to flourish again. This idea is suggested when the speaker notes the

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<sup>4</sup> I will further explore this relationship between the sins of humanity and the subsequent punishment of nature in the following chapters concerning *Paradise Lost*.

music of the angels as specifically benefiting “our human ears,” while the natural world “heard such sound” of the shepherds’ singing (126, 101). This small hint of a hierarchy of being (angels, humans, natural world) foreshadows Milton more developed ontology in *Paradise Lost*.

The second reason for the coming of Christ is peace. Part of that peace is of course achieved by the banishment of the catalogued deities that predate Christianity. Another part of the peace, however, comes from the promise of the recovery of “the age of gold” (135). In this age, “Sin will melt from earthly mould, / And Hell itself will pass away” (138-39). In other words, Christ’s arrival marks the opportunity to attain a figurative Paradise and the eventual removal of mortality. However, “wisest Fate says no, / This must not yet be so” (149-50). By forcing creation to wait for Christ’s arrival before God’s creatures can even hope to return to Paradise, Milton once again emphasizes the severity of humanity’s crime. Both the period of natural death, as indicated by the “winter wild” and “punishment melt[ing] from eathly mould” at Christ’s arrival, and the birth of the Son into the human form of the Christ child, demonstrate the natural cycle of redemption through seasonal change. That is, nature cannot be redeemed with a wave of a proverbial magic wand; instead, creation must complete the natural steps of renewing itself.

Milton’s acceptance of both a decline in nature and an opportunity for redemption reconciles Goodman and Hakewill’s differing opinions. The depiction of a fallen world in the *Nativity Ode* corresponds to Goodman’s thesis that the decline of nature represents the gravity of human sin, while the poem’s assured promise of Christ-bestowed redemption resembles Hakewill’s argument that God made a perfect creation (one without “accidentall corruption”). The ode suggests that God, in control of his creation, will redeem humans and thereby nature.

Milton, even more convincingly, displays his knowledge of and involvement in Goodman and Hakewill's argument in *Naturam non pati senium*. In this poem, Milton uses classical mythology to illustrate the power of God over nature and, in doing so, comments on the Goodman-Hakewill debate:

Ah! How perpetual are the errors which drive man's wandering mind to exhaustion! How deep the darkness which swallows him when he harbours in his soul the blind night of Oedipus! In his madness he dares to measure the deeds of God by his own, to make those laws which are cut in everlasting adamant of no more account than his own laws. (1-6)<sup>5</sup>

In these opening lines, Milton admonishes readers who would assume knowledge of God's design and reminds readers not to align the ideas of God with those of humankind. With the allusion to darkness, Milton suggests a lack of knowledge of theology. Years later, in his *Christian Doctrine*, Milton will assert that "The PARTS of CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE are two: FAITH, or KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and LOVE, or THE WORSHIP OF GOD," which indicates that Christianity requires one to learn as much as possible about God and to worship God actively by transforming the unknowable into faith (128). Additionally, in this section of *Christian Doctrine*, Milton insists, "it is very proper that all sorts and conditions of men should read [the scriptures] or hear them read regularly" (577). Therefore, when Milton cites "darkness" among men in *Naturam*, he may be alluding to his disappointment in humankind's lack of knowledge and faith.

By bringing up this perceived lack so early in the poem, Milton already may be interacting with both Goodman and Hakewill. Milton acknowledges Goodman's fear of decay in nature by using negative terms such as "darkness" and "madness." He alternatively affirms Hakewill's

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<sup>5</sup> Here and throughout I am quoting John Carey's prose translation of Milton's Latin poem.

stance that “the first founder of the world blessed [it] with perpetuall fruitfulness” (R3v); if God’s perfection cannot be measured by human means, Milton implies, then we should not presume to find God’s creation faulty because of changes in nature. His inclusion of a reference to Oedipus’s mistake of not heeding the words of Hades and turning back to look at Eurydice serves as a warning to those readers who might not implicitly trust in God. In other words, Milton is urging his readers to remember what they know of God’s unflawed design from scripture and to rely on faith when they do not have understanding. Therefore, I am suggesting that by examining the theology espoused in Milton’s later prose work, the careful reader might remember God’s role in both human and natural history and not simply leave the fate of the natural world to the errors of humankind.

In the middle section of the poem, Milton lists numerous questions of the people “deep in the darkness”:

Will the face of nature really wither away and be furrowed all over with wrinkles?  
 Will our common mother really contract her all-producing womb and grow barren  
 from old age? Will she confess herself ancient, and totter along wagging her starry  
 head? Will loathsome old age, and the years’ insatiable hunger, and filth and  
 rust really do any damage to the stars? (8-14)

In questioning the characterization of the earth, or “our common mother,” as a personified entity struggling with the physical symptoms of old age, Milton echoes the language in Hakewill’s text. Milton describes nature’s face as “furrowed all over with wrinkles,” for example, while Hakewill rejects the idea of the earth “*waxen old like a man*”; Milton mentions nature’s impending barrenness, while Hakewill scoffs at the very same notion (“imagine that nature . . . is affected with

barrenness”). These similar metaphors may point to common tropes of the era, but they also seem to indicate a familiarity on Milton’s part with Hakewill’s 1627 book.

There are also likenesses in the two authors’ skepticism. While Hakewill (or his printer) uses italics to highlight arguments he finds disappointing in his opponent’s work, Milton uses a list of increasingly charged questions that range from the natural world to classical mythology to stress a similar disappointment. The repeated use of italics and question marks renders each phrase more incredulous than the last in both authors’ works, creating a similar tone of doubt in each. Milton, of course, wrote straightforward, dramatic works such as *Samson Agonistes* and *A Maske*; here, with his series of questions, he almost creates a character delivering a heated speech. Hakewill, although not a writer of fiction or drama, fashions a similar tone through italics, pulling the reader into his prose in the same way a playwright might try to ensnare his audience. For example, Hakewill’s point that nature “being indued with a *divine and aternall youth*, is deservedly termed the *Common Parent* of all things, inasmuch as it both doth and hereafter shall bring all things forth,” is particularly effective both through the emphasized words in italics and the dramatic suggestion of the eternity of nature (R3v).

In the poem’s next long stanza, Milton answers his list of questions by seemingly siding entirely with Hakewill:

No! The Almighty Father has taken thought for the universe, and set the stars more firmly in their place. He has poised the scales of destiny with a sure weight and commanded each thing to keep its course for ever in a supremely ordered whole. (33-36)

Here Milton utterly rejects the idea of nature’s decay and returns to Hakewill’s argument that nature is “indued with a *divine and aeternall youth*” (R3v). In Milton’s words, nature is perfect



because God created it, and God is perfect—perfection here indicating an unchanging order for the universe. This suggestion is overwhelmingly positive, in that the speaker admonishes his audience for having feared that nature is out of God’s control, as Goodman indicates. At the end of *Naturam*, however, the speaker suddenly changes tactics to pursue a decidedly more apocalyptic idea. He has spent 32 lines listing evidence for how nature, and thereby the universe, is not in decay, but then he makes an abrupt turn in the last five lines:

In fact, then, the process of the universe will go on for ever, worked out with scrupulous justice, until the last flames destroy the globe, enveloping the poles and the summits of vast heaven, and the frame of the world blazes on one huge funeral pyre. (65-69)

In this passage, Milton’s picture of the apocalypse is quite a conventional one in line with Revelation. While most of the poem seems to reassure the reader that God is in control, Milton cannot help but demonstrate to his readers the fearsomeness of God’s power as well. Milton emphasizes that the end of the world will not occur as a result of human sin, but on the prerogative of God alone. By comparison, Goodman often seems to place too much weight on the power of human action and, with this cataclysmic ending to the poem, Milton once again proves his disagreement with Goodman’s worldview.

*Lycidas*, unlike the Nativity Ode or *Naturam*, does not seem as immediately concerned with the Goodman-Hakewill debate. In fact, it is difficult to argue that the poem directly engages the two men at all. There are several reasons for this: first, because the elegy was composed in 1637, ten years after Hakewill’s first edition of *Apologie* and 21 years after Goodman’s *Fall of Man*; second, because the poem was specifically constructed for another reason, to honor the death of Milton’s classmate, Edward King; and third, because, judging by the later-affixed head-

ing, Milton was instead concentrating on the corrupt church hierarchy. None of these reasons point to a motivating factor for Milton to engage with Goodman or Hakewill. Yet, Milton's pastoral elegy helps to illustrate his evolving ideas about nature, or, more particularly, plant life and its corruption, as the poem still seems to concern itself with the matter of faith in relation to nature's decay. Because of this focus, *Lycidas* effectively bridges Milton's early poems, which are more directly involved with Goodman and Hakewill, with his later epic, *Paradise Lost*, which demonstrates the mature poet's fully developed ideas about natural retribution.

*Lycidas* famously begins with a woeful shepherd mourning the death of his friend:

Yet once more, O ye laurels and once more  
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
 And with forced fingers rude,  
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. (1-5)

The shepherd, a staple of pastoral poetry, is here taking out his anguish physically on the plants by "shattering" their leaves. In pastoral poetry, shepherds and other quaint country characters commonly live in blissful harmony with the natural world: indeed, in the first glimpse of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, itself an example of pastoral poetry, the two lovers (and the world's first gardeners) are metaphorically compared with the plants in the description of their embrace (4.285-311). In a prelapsarian time devoid of decay or punishment, as well as in the classical pastoral setting, humans and plants coexist, even so far as interacting with one another, as we see in *Lycidas* as the swain affectionately recalls a pastoral utopia where "the grey-fly winds her sultry horn" as he and his friend were "Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night" (28-29). In contrast, *Lycidas* begins violently: the swain now plucks the berries prematurely and shatters

the leaves. This rough treatment of the plants signals a break in the poetic human-plant relationship at the arrival of death or some other cataclysmic change. Much as Goodman indicates the fall of nature as indicative of God's displeasure with humanity, Milton shows a schism between humans and plants, contrasted with their earlier state of harmony, when the swain saw the surrounding trees "Fanning their joyous leaves" in time with Lycidas' music (44).

Further illustrating this delicate relationship (and in keeping with the poetic tactics in the Nativity Ode), Milton continues to personify nature in *Lycidas*. In doing so, he also foreshadows what he will do in *Paradise Lost* by cataloging the flowers and subsequently bringing them to life:

And every flower that sad embroidery wears:  
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
 And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,  
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies. (148-51)

In this passage, and the lines immediately preceding it, the unnamed swain is calling on the natural world—specifically the flowers—to commemorate his dead friend and to demonstrate physically his displeasure with the English clergy. Just as Goodman's religious opponents worried that he was treading too near a return to Catholicism in his theology, so Milton was among a group of reformers who worried that the system of bishops in the English Church was corrupt in its emulation of Catholic doctrine. Milton thus broadens the scope of his grief and disappointment so as to include contemporary political and theological issues. Similarly to his use of the personified nature in the Nativity Ode that hid "her guilty front with innocent snow" (39), Milton employs the flowers in this passage to react to human activities—or rather, the poet compels the swain to call the flowers to action. The speaker orders the amaranthus to remove her beauty and requires

the daffodils to cry. These demands of the flowers not only to become personified, but also to debase themselves in reaction to human tragedy evokes the verbal and physical relationship between humans and plants prevalent in Milton's earlier and later poetry. The speaker's demeaning orders also recall Goodman's ideas about the evidence of nature's ongoing decay. Goodman considered a perceived decline in the natural world to be "signes, tokens, and symptoms" of "the disease of these times," and the swain's call for the flowers to decay seems to echo Goodman's fears that human sin continues to damage the state of nature.

In the poem's final lines, however, Milton changes course and indicates renewal for both the speaker and the natural world: "At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue: / Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new" (192-93). Here, Milton is no longer illustrating the human-plant relationship in terms of decay; instead, by placing the grieving shepherd's acceptance of Lycidas' death alongside a "fresh" and "new" natural world, Milton both accepts humanity's interconnection with nature and rejects the idea of a natural world in decay. In agreement with Goodman, Milton demonstrates humankind and nature interacting with one another sympathetically, but, in agreement with Hakewill, Milton offers hope for the future instead of doom. By suggesting a renewal of spirit for the uncouth swain and a bright tomorrow for the pastoral environment, Milton pushes his philosophy into a new sphere and prepares himself for his masterpiece: *Paradise Lost*.

### 3 “In narrow room nature’s whole wealth”: A Harmonious Paradise

The opening lines of *Lycidas* illustrate a fallen pastoral world: the shepherd mourns his dead companion, and the evergreen foliage resists his sentiment through “myrtles brown, with ivy never sere” (2). In characterizing the landscape as not dying (as indicated by the laurel, myrtle, and ivy) and uncaring (it’s never “sere,” meaning *withered*, whereas Lycidas is dead), Milton demonstrates the stunted or damaged relationship between the natural world and the forlorn speaker. He also immediately constructs a hierarchy between the two as the speaker “shreds” the leaves of the plant before him, inflicting injury on the lesser being in the height of his pain. Godfrey Goodman also recognizes a hierarchy between plants and humans in *The Fall of Man* by vocalizing his concerns over the decay of nature due to human sin. George Hakewill assuages these fears in *An Apologie*, insisting that God’s goodness and perfection prevents such a decay, but he does not deny the existence of human sin, claiming “our owne *default*,” even while not connecting sin to nature’s decay (R3v). But neither Goodman nor Hakewill goes so far as to address the emotional connection between humans and nature. They seem to overlook a fundamental trait that Milton has bestowed upon the natural world. As I discussed in the preceding section, the plants in *Lycidas* are not simply inanimate components but instead dramatize through pathetic fallacy the difference between the shepherds’ joyful labor under “the opening eye-lids of the morn” (26) and “the heavy change” (37) in the natural world following Lycidas’s death: as the swain laments, “The willows and hazel copses green, / Shall now no more be seen, / Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays” (42-44). While the emotional state of the uncouth swain is not necessarily the direct cause of nature’s failings, the swain’s downtrodden perspective causes him to feel at odds with his surroundings. This allusion to the schism between humans and nature

at the time of the Fall in *Paradise Lost* illustrates Milton's break with the Goodman and Hakewill debate of the earlier seventeenth century.

In *Paradise Lost*, the reader's first glimpse of Eden is through Satan's eyes. Milton's choice to frame our first impression of Paradise from the perspective of a fallen creature speaks to the poet's understanding of contemporary human beings as existing in a fallen state, as Irene Samuels observed (20). Satan's view of the garden is tainted, biased, and limited, as is both our and Milton's understanding of the shape of God's creation as postlapsarian beings. Even so, Satan's imperfect view of Paradise is breathtaking:

Beneath him with new wonder he now views  
 To all delight of human sense exposed  
 In narrow room nature's whole wealth, yea more,  
 A heaven on earth: for blissful Paradise  
 Of God the garden was, by him in the east  
 Of Eden planted. (4.205-10)

In keeping with Hakewill's claim that God's creation is perfect, Milton here describes a small or "narrow" space imbued with a great amount of creation. This "wealth" is astounding to "the fiend" Satan, overwhelming him and inciting in him further rage at the God he views as responsible for his lapsed state. As Satan beholds how the rivers "fed / Flowers worthy of Paradise which not nice art / In beds and curious knots, but boon / Poured forth profuse on hill and dale and plain," he does not share an emotional connection with his surroundings (4.240-43). Although he, like the shepherd speaker in *Lycidas*, plans to do injury to his natural surroundings, he remains detached. Instead, he observes the plants as one would alien beings and bestows as-

sumed characteristics upon them based on their physical form: “Flowers worthy of Paradise,” “curious knots,” and “sun first warmly smote” (4.241-44).

Milton’s richly furnished Paradise surpasses any natural depiction appearing in his earlier poems. However, some descriptive characteristics remain the same. As in the *Nativity Ode* and *Lycidas*, for example, Milton specifically describes the plants using emotional adjectives:

“Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm, / Others whose fruit burnished with gilden rind / Hung amiable” (4.248-50). The “amiable” posture of the fruit and the ability of the trees to “weep” (instead of drip or secrete) not only personify the plants, but demonstrate the garden’s vivacity. Eden, newly created, is bursting with life. Everything in this prelapsarian existence is so infinitely more living than the later, postlapsarian world that the plants are almost human.

Milton also accomplishes this humanizing of nature by assigning gender and physical bodily features to plants. A grassy lawn is described as “the flowery lap / Of some irriguous valley,” which conjures the picture of a motherly character offering her lap to a young child (4.254-55). In another example, the poem depicts how “the mantling vine / Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps / Luxuriant” (4.258-60). Here, the vine is personified as a she, and, moreover, an active she who seductively displays her fruit. This line also somewhat foreshadows Eve’s flirtations with Adam and sets up our first glimpse of the plants seemingly imitating their human guardians. As Harinder Singh Marjara emphasizes, “Milton’s nature is distinguished by its vitalism” (210). Marjara defines vitalism as a writer’s attempt “to unify nature,” a technique he suggests was used in classical literature to describe “growth in inanimate objects by means of analogy with animate beings” (210). Milton accordingly illustrates nature’s ability to flourish through metaphors aligning inanimate nature with animate beings, such as humans (210). In this

way, he asks the reader to imagine a time of perfect harmony, wherein animate and inanimate creations perfectly coexist in collaborative harmony with one another.

To emphasize the symbiotic relationship between all parts of creation in the garden, Milton uses not only his descriptions of the plants themselves—for example, the grassy valley’s lap—but also Paradise’s seasonal atmosphere. In reference to the temperate climate of the garden, the poem states that “spring and autumn here / Danced hand in hand” (V.394-95). Instead of the cycle of seasons characteristic of a postlapsarian world, there are two seasons at one time in Paradise. Eve notes this phenomenon and rationalizes it as a product of her love for Adam:

“With thee conversing I forget all time, / All seasons and their change, all please alike” (4.639-40). While it seems clear from the exposition that the garden is naturally set to be mid-spring and mid-autumn simultaneously for the purpose perhaps of optimum planting and harvest, the blissfully in love Eve relates the phenomenon naturally to her own activities, an opinion which, while innocent, also recalls Goodman’s suggested link between the flourishing of the natural world and human goodness. Eve’s inability to survey the scene as an outsider like Satan, in that she sees the seasons’ motionless balance as a reflection of her romantic relationship with Adam, shows her compliance in this prelapsarian cooperative existence.

Ellen Goodman, in her article “Human Mastership of Nature: Aquinas and Milton's Paradise,” remarks on the communal state of Eden:

Having excluded from the ideal landscape whatever elements may impede human welfare, most commentators consequently envisioned nature in Eden as ideally providing for its human masters . . . This stress on nature’s ideal provisions tended to associate the state of innocence with a condition of calm stasis. Milton amplifies and redefines relationships between master and subject by distinguishing



between ideal provisions and the means by which creatures derive utility from things designed for their use. (12-13)

Here Goodman suggests that the plants and humans work together: the humans provide gardening and guidance, and the plants provide food, even though humans maintain a higher placement on Milton's ontological scale. The "condition of calm stasis" allows for both seed and harvest, encouraging the plants to remain constantly at full bloom. Like the plants, the humans remain at the height of youth, always full of energy and love for each other and their garden. Satan, looking on, can see only room for destruction, a symptom of his fallen state heightened by the language of the poem, which allows fallen readers to see the perfect balance of the prelapsarian garden where Satan cannot, and provides us with a glimpse of the seventeenth-century Goodman's perspective: a world where plants and humans are interconnected.

Adam and Eve's relationship with the plants of Eden is best illustrated in their work. As well as being the world's first people, first lovers, and first parents, they are the world's first gardeners. In keeping with Milton's insistence on free will, Adam concedes that his and his partner's jobs as gardeners are both ordained by God and chosen by them:

But let us ever praise him, and extol  
 His bounty, following our delightful task  
 To prune these growing plants, and tend these flowers,  
 Which were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet. (4.436-39)

Adam and Eve find their job "delightful," indicating that they freely choose to tend to the plants. At the same time, their gardening activities are referred to as a "task," showing God's hand in their chosen vocation. This combination of choice and duty is a prime example of the harmony at work in every aspect of Paradise. Additionally, work is made more "sweet" by the presence of a

lover: as Adam tells his partner, “were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet” (4.439). Finally, the form of this passage underlines the collaborative effort of gardening and existence through the division of the first, second, and fifth lines. The placement of a comma in these lines creates an almost lyrical lilt, evoking the give-and-take present in both the couple’s relationship and their tasks, and showing how two separate parts come together to create a cohesive whole. This is especially evident in the final line where “toilsome” and “thee” (Eve) are shown to be “sweet” when joined.

This Miltonic balance not only exists amongst the plants and the people individually, but also throughout Eden’s natural world. Hakewill states that God’s creation is one of “order,” which Milton illustrates through his depiction of human-plant relations (Haan 150). Adam tells Eve,

With first approach of light, we must be risen,  
 And at our present labour, to reform  
 Yon flowery arbours, yonder alleys green,  
 Our walks at noon, with branches overgrown,  
 That mock our scant manuring, and require  
 More hand than ours to lop their wanton growth:  
 Those blossoms also, and those dropping gums,  
 That lie bestrewn unsightly and unsmooth,  
 Ask riddance, if we mean to tread with ease;  
 Meanwhile, as nature wills, night bids us rest. (4.624-33)

Again, the division of many of the lines by commas subtly suggests the harmonious nature of Eden through the poem’s physical form and lilting meter, while Adam’s use of the words “la-

bour” and “must” demonstrate the obligatory side of their gardening. However, the actions Adam details seemingly show less cooperation and more instruction between the first couple and their plants. “Wanton growth” must be “lop[ped],” and “bestrewn” “gums” “ask riddance.” While Adam and Eve seem, for the most part, to engage in a loving and constructive relationship with their plants, in places they behave like gardeners, cutting, eating, and controlling their crops, but in other passages, they appear almost parental. Here, Adam and Eve, while clearly delighted with their environment, are modifying the growth or behavior of their plants, acting at once like gardeners (controlling “Wanton growth”) and parents (“reform / Yon flowery arbours”). Clearly, this “reform” is for the plants’ own good, as the symbiotic nature of the garden would not allow activities that were not mutually beneficial to both the plants and their human guardians.

I use the word *gaurdians* specifically to characterize the relationship between Adam and Eve and their plants because the first couple’s behavior is so particularly guidance-oriented, transcending the common role of simple gardeners due to Adam and Eve’s emotional investment in the plants. Adam and Eve do not plow fields and whack at hedges. Instead,

they led the vine

To wed her elm; she spoused about him twines

Her marriageable arms, and with her brings

Her dower the adopted clusters, to adorn

His barren leaves (5.215-19).

The use of verbs such as “led” indicates the care with which Adam and Eve handle the plants. Furthermore, due to the couple’s care, the plants are behaving like their human caretakers, an action reminiscent of a child mimicking her parents during play. The bridal characteristics attributed to the vine twining the elm also evoke Eve’s relationship to Adam. Peter Demetz notes

that the Virgilean metaphor of the elm and the vine has long been used in literature to symbolize pastoral marriage (521). He argues that Adam and Eve's exercise in "marrying" the two plants "embodies the true marital hierarchy dear to Milton's mind": not only are Adam and Eve instructing the plants to mimic their own pastoral marriage, but this task given to them by God also instructs the couple that "a good wife . . . should remain subordinated to her husband," just as the vine relies on the elm for support (Demetz 528). Even if we question the validity of the rigid hierarchy that Demetz detects in the poem, we again notice how Milton constructs a symbiotic relationship between the humans and the plants: even a small gardening activity provides both plants and humans with mutual instruction.

The metaphoric implications of the vine and the elm are employed in two passages of *Paradise Lost*. This symbol not only emphasizes the importance of Adam and Eve's relationship with the plants, but also helps to describe Adam and Eve's relationship to each other. When Satan first sees the couple, Eve's hair

in wanton ringlets waved

As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied

Subjection, but required with gentle sway,

And by her yielded, by him best received,

Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,

And sweet reluctant amorous delay. (4.306-11)

Heralded by the simile relating the tendrils of Eve's hair to a vine, the relationship between Adam and Eve is shown to parallel the trope of the vine and the elm. The similarities between this scene and the subsequent gardening scene highlight Demetz's point about the importance of the classical metaphor to illustrate marriage. Additionally, the appearance of commas once again di-

viding the lines shows harmony—even though the use of the classical metaphor suggests hierarchical compliance between the first couple—as the second part of the lines liltily completes the first. Finally, Eve, here portrayed as the vine, works with Adam, as the elm, to create beauty together, each wholeheartedly playing a hierarchical role for the mutual gain of a strong and healthy marriage. Alternatively, Stephen Dobranski, in his essay “Clustering and Curling Locks: The Matter of Hair in *Paradise Lost*,” argues that “the description of the couple’s hair . . . emphasizes Adam and Eve’s mutuality and complicates the difference in their statuses,” and demonstrates that Milton includes both hierarchy and partnership in his depiction of the first marriage (342). Dobranski notices that because the vine and elm metaphor is most specifically applied to the couple’s hair instead of their entire bodies, the hierarchy between the two is notable but also made more intricate by a shared freeness. Just as the seasons in Paradise defy physics by their simultaneous existence, so the first couple can enjoy a hierarchical partnership. Furthermore, in much the same way that Eve is both Adam’s partner and his inferior, the plants must play a lower hierarchical role to the humans even while participating in a harmonious coexistence with their gardeners.

Adam and Eve, of course, need the plants to survive because in the prelapsarian world the couple is vegetarian. Interestingly, though, the plants also need Adam and Eve to flourish. Due to their inferiority, the literal vine and elm, as plants, need “human guidance in order to grow together. Through rational rule, both vine and elm become more productive, and the elm becomes visually not barren but fruitful” when tended by the humans (Ellen Goodman 13). The plants do not naturally grow in a manner beneficial to their ecosystem, but instead need the humans to guide their development. In return, the plants sustain their caretakers: “to their supper fruits they fell, / Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs / Yielded them” (4.331-33). The use of the

word “compliant” almost personifies the plants, as if it is their decision to render their fruit to their human guardians. In a prelapsarian world, where collaboration is of the utmost importance, the plants both require and appreciate (by giving fruit) the assistance of Adam and Eve.

In a sense, Milton’s choice to depict a mutually beneficial hierarchy illustrated through Adam and Eve’s and the plants’ mutual reliance is reminiscent of both Goodman and Hakewill’s views about the relation between humankind and nature. Hakewill notes that “the first founder of the world blessed [the earth] with perpetuall fruitfulness,” which suggests that the presence of humans on earth set all of God’s creation in motion (R3v). Goodman also implies that men and women are deeply connected with the natural world—he states plainly that the “whole [of nature] is directed to man” (B7v)—an idea which might predict that human sin would lead to the plants’ decay. Milton, too, subscribes to a hierarchical view of God’s creation, although he also includes heavenly bodies and introduces the possibility that the order of being is not fixed. In Book 5, when Raphael comes to dine with Adam and Eve, the angel relates to the humans Milton’s ontology: angels are the highest beings below God, then the humans, then the animals, then the plants, then the earth and minerals. By adding angels to the hierarchy, Raphael reminds Adam and Eve of their humble place in creation—a viewpoint which differs from Goodman’s anthropocentric idea of the world. Raphael qualifies this order by saying,

one Almighty is, from whom

All things proceed, and up to him return,

If not depraved from good, created all

Such to perfection, one first matter all,

Indued with various forms, various degrees

Of substance, and in things that live, of life;

But more refined, more spirituous, and pure,  
 As nearer to him placed or nearer tending  
 Each in their several active spheres assigned,  
 Till body up to spirit work, in bounds  
 Proportioned to each kind. (5.469-79)

In this passage, Milton points to the perfection of creation, as “Each in their several active spheres [is] assigned.” Marjara notes that Milton’s universe is designed mathematically to exist in perfect harmony. He specifies that “all things in the universe hav[e] been weighed, at the time of their creation, in . . . balance . . . and set in their places with equipoise” (189). Raphael’s speech illustrates this point: all the different components of creation work together perfectly as a cohesive whole. Just as Adam and Eve are encouraged to tend to the plants, so the angels are encouraged to teach Adam and Eve. Raphael also emphasizes that from God “All things proceed, and up to him return, / If not depraved from good,” which means that humans, through obedience, can ultimately be united with God. Raphael more specifically adds that humans might also be able to improve ontologically: “Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit, / Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend / Ethereal, as we” (5.497-99). If Adam and Eve can prove their faithfulness and thereby turn to spirit, perhaps the plants can also continue to improve and flourish under the couple’s guidance and care, although the only explicit ontological change for plants included in the epic not facilitated by their behavior, but by the “transubstantiation” of angelic digestion (5.412-13).

Just as Raphael instructs Adam and Eve in faithfulness and acts as a guide, so Adam and Eve mentor the plants. Ellen Goodman agrees with this assessment, providing the necessary logic behind such action by stating that Milton “thus shows that even ideal subjects ‘need’ the rule

of masters capable of checking their self-destructive tendencies” (13). The plants flourish because they are cared for, just as Adam and Eve draw happiness from one another and Raphael. Eden is a perfect ecosystem (until Satan infiltrates). Satan sees Adam and Eve as dominant and submissive, but his idea of their tiered relationship does not allow room for hierarchy and collaboration simultaneously. In his first viewing of the couple, they seem to him “No equal, as their sex not equal seemed,” and he decides to prey on Eve, thinking her the weaker of the two (4.296). Furthermore, he sees Adam and Eve as masters of their surroundings, rather than stewards: “Two of far nobler shape erect and tall, / Godlike erect, with native honour clad / In naked majesty seemed lords of all” (IV.285-90).

Satan’s inability to comprehend Adam and Eve’s reciprocal partnership indicates what is lost in the Fall. When Adam and Eve inevitably taste the forbidden fruit, they find themselves unable to continue to participate in such divine cooperation—effort must now be made to interpret their environment (Edwards 201). The plants are no longer charges in need of guardianship, but simply foliage either to be used or ignored. The angels are no longer benevolent teachers, but, at times, frightening sentries. Milton, in his depiction of perfection, illustrates that which Goodman longs for in *The Fall of Man*: a time before human error, when nature and humans collaborated for a common Paradise.



#### 4 “Earth trembled from her entrails”: The Fall of Humankind

Godfrey Goodman was convinced that nature was decaying due to human sin. According to Ken Hiltner, Goodman was not alone in his fear. Hiltner points out that “In Milton’s era England’s old-growth forests were almost completely destroyed, not only because of a boom in housing and ship construction but to fuel such emerging industries as copper smelting and glassmaking” (2). He suggests that “these massive ecological upheavals” created a seventeenth-century debate concerning the environment, the way global warming has prompted such discussions today (2). Clergymen like Goodman and Hakewill certainly looked for theological explanations for such changes, and, as Goodman and Hakewill were both quite well-known in their time, it would be an oversight to argue that Milton did not take these debates into consideration when composing some of his poetry, especially during his school years when he may have read Hakewill’s *Apologie*.<sup>6</sup>

*Paradise Lost*, although a much later poem and not one definitively in conversation with Goodman and Hakewill, serves as the perfect vehicle for examining the phenomenon of ecological change in the seventeenth century. Between the complete symbiosis of the prelapsarian garden and the isolation of humans from nature in the postlapsarian world, Milton comments on the relationship between human beings and plants. As previously discussed, prelapsarian Eden houses the best environment for harmonious living: the humans help the plants to grow and flourish, while the plants sustain the humans with fruit. In this section, I examine how, with the introduction of human sin, this cooperative relationship falters and disappears, leading to an environment rife for paranoia about nature’s decay.

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<sup>6</sup> See Estelle Haan; William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon; and John Carey.

Arguably, Eve's first willful step away from collaborative existence is her decision to work separately from Adam in Book 9, as she strives for them to garden more efficiently. When Eve separates herself from her partner, Satan seizes upon his opportunity to introduce sin:

Beyond his hope, Eve separate he spies,  
 Veiled in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood,  
 Half spied, so thick the roses bushing round  
 About her glowed, oft stooping to support  
 Each flower of slender stalk, whose head though gay  
 Carnation, purple, azure, or specked with gold,  
 Hung drooping unsustained, them she upstays  
 Gently with myrtle band, mindless the while,  
 Herself, though fairest unsupported flower. (9.424-32)

In this passage, we see Eve once again working in collaboration with nature, offering "support" to the flowers as a mother would tend to a child. Reciprocally, the flowers shield Eve in a "cloud of fragrance," offering her a modicum of protection from spying eyes. However, this episode differs from previous passages regarding Eve and gardening in one significant manner: Eve is "separate." Her independence from Adam here foreshadows her separation from nature through sin while literally rendering her vulnerable. Even though Eve is thoroughly amidst nature, actively supporting the delicate flowers and training them to flourish, Satan, the narrator notes, here thinks of Eve as the "fairest *unsupported* flower" (emphasis mine). If we recall that Adam and Eve were previously compared to the elm and the vine, the elm offering the vine support while the vine provides the elm with flowers and fruit, Eve now seems weaker on her own. In fact,

both she and Adam are weaker when they do not collaborate as the garden's perfectly balanced ecosystem depends on harmony.

Satan proceeds to tempt Eve with the forbidden fruit through various feats of logic. During his arguments, he offers a stark dichotomy that seems out of place in such a collaborative place as Eden. Satan argues that Eve should be "Deterred not from achieving what might lead / To happier life, knowledge of good and evil" (9.696-97). All of Eve's experiences have been in reciprocity, but now she is faced with something new. Satan, always concerned about his own relative status, introduces the idea of hierarchy without partnership, a concept that brings together comparison and jealousy. Interestingly, Milton suggests in *The Christian Doctrine* that "It was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil because of what happened afterwards: for since it was tasted, not only do we know evil, but also we do not even know good except through evil" (352). It seems that through an understanding of comparisons the mind is able to comprehend separate extremes. In the prelapsarian garden, good and evil are not independent concepts because their meaning is derived from comparison with the other and there is no evil yet: after the Fall and the introduction of evil, good is defined as evil's opposite.

The idea that Adam and Eve could be opposing entities due to their genders could never occur to Eve in a prelapsarian state. Even though Eve preferred her own reflection to Adam at her first awakening, this decision was not precipitated by gender but rather by beauty. Once Adam wins her love and companionship, she sees her husband simply as her partner and her support. However, Satan offers her superior knowledge to that of her husband, and knowledge beyond Raphael's suggested appropriate scope (when Raphael dines with the first couple, he advises Adam not to attempt to learn further than God intends, relying instead on trust where understanding ends) does not suggest harmony.

Eve takes of the fruit with disastrous consequences:

So saying, her rash hand in evil hour  
 Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate:  
 Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat  
 Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe,  
 That all was lost. (9.780-84)

By eating the fruit, Eve is separating herself physically and emotionally from her collaborative environment—physically, in that later she will be expelled from the garden and will now die; and emotionally, in that she no longer will enjoy a reciprocal or guardian relationship with the plants. This disruption in Eve’s relationship with the plants is most notable in nature’s personified response. The Earth here cries out in pain “through all her works,” which suggests, perhaps, that the flowers around Eve wilt, the sky clouds, and maybe the ground even shudders. Hiltner describes this moment as a physical uprooting: “Like some great tree which had simply reached too high for its roots in the Earth to support it, Eve falls and leaves a massive open wound in the Earth” (5). This physical response to Eve’s sin demonstrates the importance of the prelapsarian emotional relationship between humans and plants, now more apparent with its loss. Additionally, the passage illustrates the severity of Eve’s separation from the natural world through the harsh caesura after the word “lost.” The period causes the flow of the poetry to halt, jarring the reader with the consequences of Eve’s “rash” action.

Eve’s actions as a newly postlapsarian human support the drastic change in her relationship with nature: “Eve / Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else / Regarded” (9.785-87). With these lines, it is clear that Eve no longer notices her surroundings; in an instant, she has become selfish and turned away from God and his multitude of natural gifts in order to worship a

single tree. Whereas before her fall, she was “to be found thoroughly rooted in the Earth,” her actions now suggest that she no longer feels the same connection with her environment (Hiltner 4).

Unsurprisingly, Adam is devastated to learn of Eve’s transgression. Like the garden, he does not react with anger, but with sorrow: “Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet! / How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost, / Defaced, deflowered, and now to death devote!” (9.899-901). Adam, remembering the various warnings he and Eve have been given regarding the consequences for eating the fruit, understands that to fall, to be uprooted from the garden, is to die. As Hiltner explains it, “[if] pulled free of the Earth, not only the root of the plant that grips the Earth, but the ‘aerie’ leaves and the ‘odorous’ flowers will die as well” (45). Hiltner here references Raphael’s explanation of the world’s ontology through the metaphor of a flower:

Till body up to spirit work, in bounds  
 Proportioned to each kind. So from the root  
 Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves  
 More airy, last the bright consummate flower  
 Spirits odorous breathes. (5.478-82)

In this passage, Raphael describes how the various levels of creation fit together in one organism, like a flower. The earth and minerals are like the roots, the plants like the stalk, the animals like the leaves, the humans like the petals, and the angels like the scent. Hiltner’s suggestion, that Eve’s uprooting—followed by Adam’s transgression—ultimately destroys the entire ecosystem makes sense in the collaborative prelapsarian Eden. Of course, if Adam had not chosen to eat the fruit, God perhaps would have made a new companion for him, resulting in the nearly immediate redemption of Paradise. However, Adam loves Eve and chooses to follow her in sin. And if all of

God's various creations have roles to play in supporting their environment, for humanity to fail as guardians and caretakers could cause collapse. Therefore, because baser beings such as animals and plants as well as higher beings like angels rely on "the lower and higher nature of man," the sins of humankind have repercussions on the Edenic ecosystem (Marjara 271). Therefore, Eve's uprooting and Adam's subsequent fall certainly mean death for the couple and their descendants, but also, in a figurative sense, humankind's disobedience ruins the flowers the Eve so recently tended.

Adam, realizing the loss of his partner, but perhaps not understanding his own vulnerability as newly separated from his wife, decides to follow Eve's example and eat the fruit. He insists, "The link of nature draw me: flesh of flesh, / Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state / Mine shall never be parted, bliss or woe" (9.914-16). Essentially, Adam is naturally resisting his forced state of separation from his partner. If the natural state of the garden is cooperative, Adam feels an instinctual pull to exist in tandem with his Eve, or, more simply put, he loves her. He decides to join her in sin in order to remain with his beloved. In fact, he tries to see this decision as one that may limit her damage and restore their partnership: "The bond of nature draw me to my own, / My own in thee, for what thou art is mine; / Our state cannot be severed, we are one, / One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself" (9.956-59). Adam's language here, though at times metaphorical in that they are not actually sharing a body or "one flesh," is oddly straightforward. He is sure in his resolve to sin with Eve because he is sure that they must exist as a partnership. Sadly, of course, prelapsarian ideals cannot easily be applied to postlapsarian conundrums.

Once again, nature reacts physically and emotionally when Adam falls:

Earth trembled from her entrails, as again  
In pangs, and nature gave a second groan,

Wept at completing of the mortal sin

Original. (9.1000-04)

Here, more so than at Eve's transgression, nature is personified. Earth is given entrails, literally perhaps referencing an earthquake and figuratively representing the depth of Adam's transgression. Now that both humans have separated themselves from the ecosystem, nature begins to respond violently. When Eve eats the fruit, "nature gave signs of woe," but now that both humans have transgressed, "Earth trembled from her entrails," which suggests a more violent reaction. The reference to "completing of the mortal sin" indicates that there may have been a chance of salvation for the cooperative garden had Adam chosen not to follow Eve's example. The use of the word "pangs," suggesting the pain of heartbreak, also adds weight to nature's reaction. Nature sounds human in this moment, a gesture to her training at the hands of her human caretakers. Abandoned, she "groans," weeps, and laments their loss.

Adam's Fall, the "completing of the mortal sin," does not exactly mirror that of Eve. Instead of contemplating a purely selfish existence, Adam, now conqueror instead of citizen, looks upon Eve as an object of lust rather than a partner, and she looks at him in the same way. Adam's "Carnal desire inflaming, he on Eve / Began to cast lascivious eyes, she him as wantonly replied; in lust they burn" (9.1013-15). In addition to their sinful intent, the act is now performed with no regard shown for the environment they so lately revered: "Her hand he seized, and to a shady bank, / Thick overhead with verdant roof embowered / He led her nothing loath; flowers were the couch" (9.1037-39). The flowers, so recently treated as precious, are now only the backdrop for their lust.

Once the lovemaking ends, Adam and Eve find themselves embarrassed by their nakedness and angry at one another. Building on the idea of the plants as objects, Adam requests the

plants to “cover me ye pines, / Ye cedars, with innumerable boughs / Hide me, where I may never see [stars or sunlight] more” (9.1088-90). This passage stands in sharp contrast to the earlier scene wherein “the compliant boughs” yielded the first couple whatever they might need (4.332). Now reciprocal and respectful communication between the humans and the plants seems to have ceased: Adam still talks directly to nature, but the humans proceed to take without giving of themselves. In their effort to hide their nakedness, Adam and Eve sew together rudimentary clothes from “The fig-tree, not that kind for fruit renowned” (9.1101). This absence of fruit—a sign of growth and development—is significant: it shows that Adam and Eve’s motives have developed beyond basic sustenance. Like the practice of deforestation prevalent in seventeenth-century England, Adam and Eve’s use of nature for clothing rather than food is an assault on the ecosystem. This destructive action is a product of their sin, a point which goes far to bolster Goodman’s assertion that the decay of nature is due to human error.

Heaven notices both Adam and Eve’s transgressions and their new relationship with one another and their surroundings. When the Son comes to earth to speak to the couple, they no longer fit in the perfect ecosystem. God declares,

But longer in that Paradise to dwell,  
 The law I gave to nature him forbids:  
 Those pure immortal elements that know  
 No gross, no unharmonious mixture foul,  
 Eject him tainted now. (11.48-52)

The ejection of Adam and Eve is apparently not so much a punishment, as a practical decision. As God states, nature operates under collaborative laws in Paradise, laws which are impossible for the fallen couple now to follow. In fact, Adam and Eve eventually begin to notice the differ-



ence in their relationship with the garden. Adam in particular finds it difficult to understand nature:

Beast now with beast gan war, and fowl with fowl,  
 And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,  
 Devoured each other; nor stood much in awe  
 Of man, but fled him. (10.710-13)

Karen L. Edwards explains Adam's perplexity at his new relationship with the animals as a difficulty in reading his surroundings (200). Before the Fall, Adam and Eve often interacted with animals easily, never worrying about predators. While the couple still has logic and can therefore still interpret their surroundings, the task is much harder, requiring a concerted and conscious effort. The pair is also markedly less trusting of nature, probably because understanding it no longer comes to them as naturally. As Edwards emphasizes, Adam "perceives among beasts, fowl, and fish only hostile pairings, the terribly intimate relationship of devourer and devoured" (200). Adam also looks at the change in the animals as an omen portending some further punishment from God: "Oh Eve, some further change awaits us nigh, / Which heaven by these mute signs in nature shows" (11.193-94). Adam's use of the word "mute" in his proclamation underscores his inability to communicate with or comprehend nature as he could in prelapsarian Eden.

Adam is correct in his interpretation of the animals: God is going to punish Adam and Eve. The Son enumerates the consequences of their sin when he descends to earth to speak with the first couple after the Fall. He details their punishment, emphasizing arduous childbirth and difficult labor. The Son elaborates in particular on the difficulty of postlapsarian gardening:

Cursed is the ground for thy sake, thou in sorrow  
 Shalt eat thereof all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles it shall bring thee forth  
 Unbid, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field,  
 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,  
 Till thou return unto the ground. (10.201-06)

The schism between humans and plants is most noticeable in this passage. Whereas before the Fall, Adam and Eve lovingly cultivated the plants and, to their delight, the plants compliantly provided the couple with sustenance, now the harmony of the plant-human relationship is gone. Adam and Eve will struggle to harvest their crops, and some of the plants (those with “Thorns” and “thistles”) will actively make the couple’s task more difficult.

In addition, the pair is to be expelled from the garden. Eve is heartbroken by this news, perhaps for the first time understanding the gravity of her crime:

Must I thus leave thee Paradise? Thus leave  
 Thee native soil, these happy walks and shades,  
 Fit haunt of gods? Where I had hope to spend,  
 Quiet though sad, the respite of that day  
 That must be mortal to us both. O flowers,  
 That never will in other climate grow,  
 My early visitation, and my last  
 At ev’n, which I bred up with tender hand  
 From the first op’ning bud, and gave ye names. (11.269-77)

In this brief moment of remembrance of her foregone relationship with her precious flowers, Eve cries out for the past and for her lost botanical companions. Most particular in her speech is her memory of the flowers she “bred up” and “gave . . . names.” These behaviors highlight her

mothering personality, both showing the depth of her emotional relationship with the natural world and foreshadowing her role as humankind's first mother. However, even in this moment of abject despair, Raphael's former promise of upward ontological mobility coupled with the Son's appeal for mercy continues to provide hope. Following a detailed account of Adam and Eve's offspring, Michael offers the couple specific instructions for attaining a new Eden:

Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,  
By name to come called charity, the soul  
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath  
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
A paradise within the, happier far. (12.583-87)

It may not be as simple as blind faith, but by adding an active pursuit of goodness, Adam and Eve can find redemption and peace as fallen beings. They will have peaceful and joyous hearts and minds through a more deliberate faithfulness. Even though the harmonious, natural utopia of Eden may be forever lost, Paradise within is still a possibility.

## 5 “Must I leave thee Paradise?”: The Human-Plant Relationship Moving Forward

To say that all interaction between nature and humans ceased after the Fall of humankind would be fallacious. If such were the case, Goodman and Hakewill need not have argued about nature’s state in the seventeenth century. At the same time, to insist that nature and humanity enjoy a symbiotic existence in the present millennium would also be a lie, given the current concerns about pollution and global warming that echo seventeenth-century concerns over deforestation and climate change. When Goodman lamented that “nature in generall is much corrupted” (B7v), perhaps his fears may have been a bit exaggerated, but Hakewill also sounds extreme when he declares that the earth is “indued with a *divine and aternall youth*” (R3v). Milton’s depiction of Paradise before and after the Fall, as well as his characterization of nature in his earlier poetry, points to a middle ground. Perhaps nature is not decaying—in the sense that it is not continuing to deteriorate exponentially since the moment of Original Sin—but perhaps it is also not in a sublime state of perfection.

Milton ends his epic on a note of hope. When the angel Michael descends from heaven to expel Adam and Eve from the garden, his attitude is that of a teacher more than a punisher, although his compassion is not immediately recognized by the forlorn and mortified Adam and Eve. Like Raphael, Michael uses his time with the first couple to guide them gently toward a path of grace and salvation. As he tells Adam,

Adam, heaven’s high behest no preface needs:  
Sufficient that thy prayers are heard, and Death,  
Then due by sentence when thou didst transgress,  
Defeated of his seizure many days  
Given thee of grace, wherein thou mayst repent,

And one bad act with many deeds well done

Mayst cover: well may then thy Lord appeased

Redeem thee quite from Death's rapacious claim. (11.251-58)

The hope Michael provides in this passage is in the continued relationship between humans and God. The endurance of this relationship suggests that, although the ecosystem of Eden is forever altered, the ontological scheme of creation still exists. The first evidence of this continuity is obviously the persistent relationship between the angels and the humans—that even after they have fallen, Michael is still sent to guide them, if only for a short while. As Raphael suggested, it might be possible for humans, through faith, to ascend the ontological ladder and join the angels. However, a change has occurred: no longer will faith and abstaining from eating the fruit be enough to ensure eternal salvation. Now that the humans live in a fallen state, “deeds well done” as well as “virtue, patience, temperance,” and “charity” are also required to effectively worship God and reach an inner paradise, as I previously mentioned (12.583-84). In addition to these personal changes, Adam is also told of the future coming of the Son in the form of Jesus Christ. Because Christ will have the “glory and power to judge both quick and dead” (12. 460), Adam and Eve’s adoption of both “deeds well done” as well as their more specifically emphasized virtues will assure an absolving judgment from Christ, even though they will have died long before Christ’s arrival.

In *The Christian Doctrine*, Milton addresses this first sacrament described to the humans by Michael. Before the fall, “Adam was not required to perform any works,” which suggests that in a perfect world, with no sin to be forgiven, obeying and praising God would be enough for the couple to ascend ultimately to God (351). Therefore, as Milton explains, “The tree of knowledge of good and evil was not a sacrament, as is commonly thought, for sacraments are meant to be

used, not abstained from; but it was a kind of pledge or memorial of obedience” (351). In other words, the difference between “do not eat and come to Heaven” and “do good work and come to Heaven” is the introduction of a sacrament divorced from the natural world, whereas Adam and Eve’s prelapsarian relation to the Tree of Knowledge defined their innocence.

Michael continues to reassure Adam further of God’s grace and presence:

Yet doubt not but in valley and in plain  
 God is as here, and will be found alike  
 Present, and of his presence many a sign  
 Still following thee, still compassing thee round  
 With goodness and paternal love, his face  
 Express, and of his steps the track divine. (11.349-54)

God’s continuing “paternal love” shows that while his relationship with humankind has changed, it has not disappeared. Likewise, the relationships between humans and all other forms of creation have also changed but not disappeared. As we can see in poems such as *Lycidas*, Milton still depicts humans coexisting with oftentimes personified nature, although the relationship is altered. Instead of perpetually “compliant boughs” (*Paradise Lost* 4.332), humans at times pluck “berries harsh and rude” (*Lycidas* 3). Additionally, it is clear in early poems that the plants are personified more often for the purpose of literary enhancement, whereas in *Paradise Lost*, the personification of plants suggests that their activity is integral to the plot. Nature’s reaction to the Fall and Eve’s tearful reaction to her expulsion add significant drama to the proceedings of *Paradise Lost*. Milton takes this idea from Genesis, where the postlapsarian agricultural labor of Adam and Eve is also emphasized. He enhances this point by dramatizing the prelapsarian harmony Adam and Eve enjoyed with nature.

In regard to the Goodman-Hakewill debate, I believe that *Paradise Lost* illustrates Milton's stance to be almost squarely between the two men's chastising views of nature. Instead of agreeing with Goodman that the natural world is in the midst of an unstoppable death spiral, or agreeing with Hakewill that God's creation is perfect and predestined to remain so, Milton recognizes that nature's role fundamentally changed with the occurrence of Original Sin. This shift seems immediately more in keeping with Goodman's stance, in that his reasoning for nature's decayed state is human error; however, Milton's insistence on the possibility of nature's redemption, both in *Paradise Lost* and in the Nativity Ode, seems to align him more with Hakewill, who, because he believed that God's creation was infallible, sees the perceived decline in nature as part of a redemptive plan. In fact, because, as a Calvinist, Hakewill believed in predestination, he might have attributed this natural cycle of decay and restoration as evidence of God's foreknowledge. Milton, by comparison, insists on free will and thus clearly believes in the possibility of decline. In lieu of either extreme, Milton seems to emphasize a cyclical nature, one that goes through periods of decline and renewal. This is especially evident in his imagining a prelapsarian Eden of unchanging, simultaneous seasons in contrast to the changing seasonal extremes of the postlapsarian world.

This sense of hope is clear in the final lines of *Paradise Lost*. Adam and Eve are leaving the garden, walking away into the sunset in a manner that recalls the shepherd's departure at the end of *Lycidas*: "At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue: / Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new" (192-93). For Adam and Eve,

The world was all before them, where to chose  
 Their place of rest, and providence their guide:  
 They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,

Through Eden took their solitary way. (12.646-49)

In both passages, Milton paints a pastoral picture of hope for an improving future. For the shepherd in *Lycidas*, the future portends peace after the death of his companion. For Adam and Eve, the future holds the first sacrament and God's grace. More important for my purposes, however, Adam and Eve's future includes the possibility of a renewed symbiotic relationship with both God and his creation, so long as the couple proves worthy through good deeds and faith. This promise, for Milton, seems to hold true across time, suggesting a hopeful tomorrow not only for Adam and Eve, but also for the state of nature in seventeenth-century England.



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