English Literary Studies
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"Earth felt the wound": Humans and their Natural Environment in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

Master's thesis

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INTRODUCTION

> So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
> Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat:
> Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
> Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe,
> That all was lost. (IX.780-4)

When, during *Paradise Lost*'s climax, Eve takes the forbidden fruit in her hands and takes a bite, Earth immediately responds. Even before Adam and Eve realise the gravity of their new situation, Earth immediately feels the change and laments it. Earth's involuntary reaction to this moment establishes her as a character in the epic and confirms a strong connection between humanity and their natural environment. Because the human characters and the natural world are intertwined so closely, the Fall as depicted in *Paradise Lost* affects not only humanity, but all of Creation. Moreover, drastic changes occur after Adam and Eve's transgression which again confirm this strong connection between humanity and the rest of nature.

This thesis is interested in this deep-rooted connection between the two human characters in *Paradise Lost* and their natural environment, and the way this corresponds to the poem's – and the poet's – cultural-historical contexts. Although environmentalism seems a rather modern concern, this thesis will argue that *Paradise Lost* presents many of the same sentiments and that there was already a considerable seventeenth-century awareness of the mutual dependency between humanity and nature.

In *Paradise Lost,* the Fall causes a desacralisation of humanity's natural environment, and it is explicitly framed as a tragedy. This suggests that the ideal relationship between humanity and their natural environment is that of equality. Regarding *Paradise Lost* in this way, it seems contradictory to Genesis 1:28. After all, as Leah S. Marcus notes, the most-

commonly read version of Genesis "emphasises human *dominion over* nature" (96). She further observes that, in the context of the poem, Milton places the blame "for the destruction of natural perfection and harmony squarely and directly on harmful human intervention in the natural world" (96). Ken Hiltner extensively addresses the relevance of place in *Paradise Lost,* interpreting their ejection from Paradise as a move from place to space and observing Adam and Eve's initial "internal relation" (20) to their place, which they lose upon their ejection from the garden.

The changes made to Earth and the environment are caused by humanity's foolish intervention. These changes bring forth a great change in humanity's relationship to their environment, from reciprocal to nonreciprocal. Humanity and nature initially need each other, whereas after the Fall, nature rejects Adam and Eve as they are ejected from the garden of Eden.

Marcus describes a vitalist movement during the seventeenth century which attempted to mend the mistakes made by Adam and Eve, and thus restore Paradise. Nature was abundantly used for human purposes at the time, but simultaneously there was thus a strong awareness of and even a great concern for the preservation of nature. While the term environmentalism was not coined until the twentieth century, there were arguably 'environmentalist' movements active in the seventeenth century, which sought for political legislation regarding the exploitation of nature for human purposes.

Today, the topic of environmentalism is more relevant than ever. The twenty-first century faces climate change and environmental crises, consequently this is a topic that receives a lot of attention from the general public and governments are actively seeking for interventions to reduce or stop environmental degradation. Seeing these same environmental concerns within a seventeenth-century fictional narrative, *Paradise Lost*, supplies

opportunities for secondary-school teachers such as myself to implement seventeenth-century literature in the curriculum by linking it to modern-day relevant issues and topics for debate.

The first chapter of this thesis will explore relevant seventeenth-century cultural-historical contexts, focussing on environmental issues of the seventeenth century. Early modern poets specifically used the theme of Nature in their work, something which is particularly visible in pastoral poetry. Moreover, the narrative of the Fall was a common motif and subject for early modern poetry. This first chapter will also offer close readings of two poems, one by Andrew Marvell and one by Aemilia Lanyer, which exemplify these themes and subjects.

The second chapter will explore *Paradise Lost* before the Fall, with obviously a focus on the relationship between Adam and Eve and their natural environment. This chapter will explore the depiction of the garden itself, providing links to the pastoral poetry as discussed in the first chapter. Furthermore, the chapter will explore the close-knit relationship between the poem's two human characters and their environment. This relationship is reciprocal and mutually dependent, providing a contrast to the common interpretation of Genesis 1:28. Because the prelapsarian relationship between humanity and their environment is depicted as equal and reciprocal, it is suggested that this is the ideal relationship, and that this is the state humanity needs to restore by atoning for original sin.

The third and final chapter will explore *Paradise Lost* after the Fall, again naturally with a focus on the relationship between Adam and Eve and their environment. A considerable change takes place after Adam and Eve eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Changes that relate to nature itself, but also changes that relate to the connection between Adam and Eve and the rest of nature. Their relationship to the Garden has irrevocably altered, and the connection they once enjoyed with all flora and fauna within the

Garden seems lost. Adam and Eve are ejected from Eden and must find a new place to live where they may one day attain a "Paradise within" (XII.587).

The concluding chapter will argue that *Paradise Lost* presents an ideal relationship between humanity and nature. Furthermore, the epic emphasises that this relationship must be restored, based on the visible changes after the Fall. Moreover, this concluding chapter will argue that there was an awareness of environmental issues in the seventeenth century; that there was an active vitalist movement seeking to restore Eden, and that this sentiment is echoed in Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Finally, a link will be made between seventeenth-century environmental issues, the vitalist movement and its depiction in *Paradise Lost* and similar twenty-first century issues. By making this link, I aim to establish relevance between seventeenth-century poetry and modern-day issues, in order to practically use this connection in the classroom.

1. CULTURAL-HISTORICAL CONTEXTS: NATURE AND THE FALL IN EARLY MODERNITY

This first chapter will explore ecology and 'environmentalism' specifically in the seventeenth century. I will focus on seventeenth-century environmentalist debates and some of the religious discourses by which these debates were informed. Considering the popularity of pastoral poetry during this era, I will also make a link between this and the environmental changes of the seventeenth century. Moreover, I will closely look at poetry using the Fall-narrative. Ultimately, this chapter will form a contextual basis for the textual analysis of *Paradise Lost* in chapters 2 and 3.

1.1 Historical Contexts: humanity and nature in the seventeenth century

As Ken Hiltner points out, ecological concerns are often considered modern. However, Hiltner points out that there was a "profound ecological change" in Milton's seventeenth-century England: "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. Enormous agricultural changes, in part brought about by enclosure and engrossing, also radically altered the English landscape" (2). Indeed, about Britain's deforestation Diane Kelsey McColley points out:

> During the seventeenth century, Britain's forests were not disafforested (deregulated) but deforested. Trees were cut by both sides in the civil wars and by both monarchs and Protector to pay the King's and the Commonwealth's war bills, to feed and warm the poor in hard times, and to replenish the naval fleet and increase trade (100).

The ecological changes that took place in the seventeenth century were thus the result of human interference and their purpose was likewise human. After all, deforestation took place in order to build houses, to supply the army, to make trade possible and to develop industry. Todd A. Borlik explains the lack of resistance to these ecological changes by stating that "most people in pre-industrial society did not have the luxury to be sentimental about

wilderness" (2). Moreover, it was arguably ultimately done in order to make Britain's people, and its economy, benefit from it.

McColley attributes humanity's manipulation of nature to mankind's interpretation of the book of Genesis, which asserts dominion over nature, calling this interpretation a "Calvinist theology holding that the natural world was made exclusively for the earthly sustenance of the human soul" (157). She further notes the rise of Baconian and Cartesian proto-science, "which made nature a storehouse of commodities to be extracted by technology" (157). Moreover, colonisation of the New World played a significant role; colonisers expressed their admiration of the bountifulness of nature in the New World, but also the need to subdue it (McColley 157). Important developments in the seventeenth-century, whether it be intellectual, scientific, industrial or colonial, thus produced significant ecological change. Furthermore, these advances provided the need for even more urban development.

Indeed, McColley notes that "[h]uman beings and other beings have always manipulated nature, but these problems were accelerated by increased power over nature without a sufficient ethic or polity to temper this power" (3). Hiltner points out that this ecological change fuelled public debate, suggesting that there was a considerable concern with the preservation of nature in early modernity itself. This is supported by McColley, who notes that "[m]otives for preserving and restoring forests were mixed all along the political spectrum. Both royalists and republicans took a managerial approach to nature, and no party can claim all the credit or blame either for the new respect for trees that began to spring up as they were cut down" (100).

As claimed by McColley earlier in this paragraph, the common interpretation of the Bible's book of Genesis was one of the main causes of humanity's interference in nature. These environmental changes as discusses earlier, and the exploitation of natural resources

coincided with the publication of one of the most widely published and – to this day – the most popular English translations of the Bible: the King James Bible.

1.2 The book of Genesis in the seventeenth-century Bible

In 1611, the King James Bible was published. This version of the Bible became more widely available and allowed for a larger number of people to access the scriptures in English. Bernard M. Levinson and Joshua A. Berman observe that because of the Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Christians "were encouraged to study the Bible themselves" (4). Levinson and Berman name two earlier translations of the Bible which led to the emergence of the King James Bible, namely the Geneva Bible of 1560 and the Bishops' Bible of 1568.

Levinson and Berman point out that the notes in the Geneva Bible "contained some interpretations that were sympathetic to the right of the oppressed to resist a tyrant, and that raised questions about the "the divine right of kings"" (4). Because of the "royalist leanings" (Levinson and Berman 4) of the Bishops' Bible, it was named the official Bible of the Church of England. However, because the Geneva Bible was translated more clearly, many people still preferred and used this version. To solve this, King James commissioned a new translation. The first edition was "appointed to be read in churches", as stated on the title page. However, smaller editions followed and were printed in large quantities. More people were thus able to read and interpret the Bible themselves.

The argument McColley puts forward with regard to humanity's interference in nature, and the subsequent environmental changes is based on interpretations of the book of Genesis. In Genesis, when God creates Adam and Eve, the King James Bible reads:

> And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish in the sea, and over

> the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (KJB, Genesis 1:28)

This passage from Genesis indeed allows for plentiful interpretations, ranging from stewardship to absolute dominion and exploitation. Peter Harrison describes a shift in the interpretation of Genesis 1:28. He notes that in the patristic and mediaeval periods, the Bible was often read allegorically, and "[t]he Genesis injunction to exercise dominion over the beasts was commonly understood as a counsel of interior control" (19). However, he does note that "references to exercising command over nature were typically associated with inner control. The capacity to exercise dominion over the natural world was simply an external sign of far more important self-mastery" (20). During the ages, there were several significant technological developments which led to the use of natural resources and energies. In fact, Harrison points out that "[i]n the seventeenth century […] [a]pologists for the new sciences, advocates of more efficient agricultural practices, promoters of colonies – even humble gardeners – all appealed to the text of Genesis in an attempt to show that their activities were expressly authorized by scripture" (22). There was thus a shift from an allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1:28, to a literal one in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Harrison points out: "Adam was held to have once quite literally commanded all the creatures, and this was the kind of dominion that seventeenth-century readers of scripture thought should be re-established" (24). A good example of this sentiment is *The New Organon*, published in 1620, in which Francis Bacon states: "Only let the human race recover that right over nature which belongs to it by divine bequest, and let power be given it; the exercise thereof will be governed by sound reason and true religion" (116).

Naturally, this sentiment was not shared among all early moderns. Environmentalism was seemingly growing, and this provided seventeenth-century artists, particularly poets, with relevant and controversial themes to work into their art. Moreover, there were some people,

such as John Evelyn, who openly advocated the preservation of nature, and are thus seemingly early examples of environmentalists.

1.3 'Environmentalists' in the seventeenth century

Philosopher and naturalist John Evelyn was one of nature's advocates, publishing multiple pamphlets about nature preservation. While the term was not coined until 1922, Evelyn was arguably an example of a seventeenth-century 'environmentalist'. In 1661, he published *Fumifugium,* a pamphlet in which he presents proposals to purify the London air. In it, he appeals to parliament, noting that "it will become our Senators […] that they will consult as well the State of the Natural as the Politick Body of this Great Nation […] since, without their mutual harmony, and well-being, there can nothing prosper, or arrive at its desired perfection" (23). However, his plans did not succeed, most likely because of his lack of financial solutions (Parry 1). After all, the causes of the lack of pure air served a primarily economic purpose; in McColley's words, "Trees were financial and political pawns" (100). Of Evelyn's warnings, McColley notes that his pleas fell on deaf ears in parliament, but that "[m]any seventeenth-century poets did heed the "Natural Body" of the nation and the world" (2). In this context, she names poets who had links to natural history and philosophy, such as Vaughan, Cavendish and Milton. McColley further notes that "[t]hese poets both embraced advances in the knowledge of nature and warned against intemperate applications of it" (3), and she attributes to them a kind of "ecological wisdom" which is still found to this day. McColley further notes that "their language not only expresses thought and perception but can also help form and integrate our capacities to perceive, consider, and speak of the natural world" (2). In fact, McColley states that English poetry of the seventeenth century is "deeply and allusively concerned with what is actually happening to the natural world: not only the classic matters of mining and agriculture, but also accelerated air pollution, deforestation, damming of rivers, and draining of wetland" (79). Milton is considered a good example of

this ecological concern, as he incorporates it in his works, specifically *Paradise Lost*. As such, the ecological debate did not limit itself to politics in parliament, but also made its way into seventeenth-century poetry.

It was not merely poets who took a considerable interest in the connection between humanity and nature. Leah S. Marcus describes seventeenth-century poets' use of the 'pathetic fallacy', a term coined by John Ruskin, which is "a poetic invocation of symbiosis between human beings and the natural world" (373). Marcus explains that Ruskin defined the pathetic fallacy as arising "when the poet attributes his own emotion to elements of the natural world under the false impression that they are participating in his sorrow or his joy" (373). Marcus continues by stating that not only poets attributed emotion to nature, but that there was "a strong current of vitalism in mid seventeenth-century England" (372-3) with a "project of repairing the Fall and restoring Eden" (373). Marcus names physicians and pre-scientists as people who "readily and consistently attributed emotions, volition, and agency to elements of the natural world" (373), providing an example of physicians' conceptualisation of the human body as an "assemblage of quasi-independent organisms linked by powers of sympathy and antipathy" (374). Marcus notes that this vitalist materialism can abundantly be found in the writings of Marvell and Milton, stating that in their writing "there is nothing fallacious about the idea that the poet can address himself to plants and animals and exist in a state of emotive symbiosis with elements of the natural world" (375). There was thus a movement in the seventeenth century which occupied itself with the emotional connection between humanity and nature, and which actually strove for a restoration of Eden. This movement was not only found in poetic and artistic circles, but also scientific ones.

As seen earlier, John Evelyn appealed for legislative action to reduce air pollution in London. About this excerpt, McColley notes that "this proposition might have had more effect and received a less managerial formulation if the body politic had been less preoccupied with

the commodification of nature and more attuned to those unacknowledged legislators, poets" (57). McColley's note about poets being 'unacknowledged legislators' refers to *A Defence of Poetry* by Percy Bysshe Shelley. In this essay, Shelley argues that poetry is the result of human values, and that poetry thus produces human values. Applying Shelley's argument to this seventeenth-century context of 'environmentalism' in early modern poetry, it is clear to see what McColley is referring to. Indeed, a lot of seventeenth-century poetry contains themes relating to environmentalism. This notion is specifically found in the pastoral, which was hugely popular during this era.

1.4 Early modern pastoral poetry

Andrew McRae notes that "[i]n a vital cultural movement, stimulated by continental developments in landscape painting and coloured by traditions of pastoral literature, poets consistently represented their native countryside as an untroubled site of rural pleasures" (36). The pastoral tradition in the Early Modern period was a means of escaping the increasing modernity of urban life, and of the developments that were brought with it. It presents a seeming return to the simplicity of nature, which provides a stark contrast to what poets presented as the corruption of life in the city. Stephanie Elizabeth Hunt argues that pastoral was not only used as a genre in early modern England, but "as a versatile apparatus for examining how concerns central to literary studies [...] were integral to political philosophy's claims about the sources of our obligations to other humans and to the natural world" (iii). Hunt further notes that "pastoral is political […] because it signals a text's investment within its own historical moment and the institutions of power that prevail in that moment" (16).

An example of this is Andrew Marvell's *The Garden*, published posthumously in 1681. The vitalist materialism as described earlier is present in this pastoral poem. In fact, Marcus notes that "[w]e can profitably locate Marvell's seeming obsession with transits in and out of intimate proximity to a beneficent natural world in terms of the strong current of

vitalism in mid seventeenth-century England" (373). The narrator of the poem seemingly criticising society, and expressing a sense of the futility of war:

> How vainly men themselves amaze
> To win the Palm, the Oke, or Bayes,
> And their uncessant Labours see
> Crown'd from some single Herb or Tree,
> Whose short and narrow verged Shade
> Does prudently their Toyles upbraid; (I 1-6).

By using the adverb 'vainly', Marvell immediately sets the tone of his poem as being critical towards society and mankind. Patsy Griffin confirms this, stating that the narrator "meditates on the ambitions of men for military glory and poetic fame and laughs at their frenzied activity" (49). Considering the poem was written in the wake of the devastating and bloody English civil war, it may be read as a clear commentary on the futility of that specific war, and as a means to escape the hostility of society in the second half of seventeenth-century England.

As might be expected in pastoral poetry, the second stanza reads much like a devoted love letter to the garden itself. The narrator of the poem starkly contrasts the peaceful garden with the restlessness in society outside it:

> Fair quiet, have I found thee here,
> And Innocence, thy Sister dear!
> Mistaken long, I sought you then
> In busie Companies of Men;
> Your sacred Plants, if here below,
> Only among the Plants will grow.
> Society is all but rude,
> To this delicious Solitude" (II 1-8).

The narrator clearly expresses his preference for being in the garden over the company of men. By painting such an idealised picture of the titular garden, the garden in the poem is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. By emphasising the innocence of the narrator's environment, and by the depiction of "sacred plants" (II-5), this notion is reaffirmed.

The fifth stanza of the poem allows for even more Biblical comparisons. Marvell describes the garden in detail, emphasising the splendour and lusciousness of nature within it. This seventeenth-century garden is obviously a manmade form of nature but has clearly been made in order to replicate Paradise. However, the way it is depicted in this poem is not entirely in line with the vitalist movement. The seventeenth-century movement of vitalism emphasised the restoration of Eden through internalisation and awareness. This poem might perhaps display the other side of this concept of restoring Eden, namely by the narrator attempting to literally recreate Eden, and by doing so attaining a more superficial version of Eden. The narrator of the poem has thus seemingly actively sought for a restoration of Eden, and perhaps therefore purposefully created this garden:

> What wond'rous life in this I lead!
> Ripe Apples drop about my head;
> The Luscious Clusters of the Vine
> Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine;
> The Nectaren, and curious Peach,
> Into my hands themselves do reach;
> Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,
> Insnared with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass (V 1-8)

The description of the bountifulness of the garden in the poem is reminiscent of that of Milton's prelapsarian garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost.* The portrayal of the fruit in this stanza recalls to the poem's vitalism. By presenting the fruit in this stanza as the actors, the narrator

ascribes them agency, and free will; as if the fruit from the garden wishes to please him. The narrator's expression of adoration is interrupted by his fall. In a garden so reminiscent of the garden of Eden, the narrator's falling is akin to humanity's Fall in the Book of Genesis and *Paradise Lost*. The narrator stumbling over the plentiful melons and being ensnared in flowers might suggest that he is overwhelmed by his environment. Nevertheless, his fall is a gentle one, landing on soft grass. Moreover, his being ensnared by flowers contrasts with being ensnared by the serpent, or rather, Satan. About this passage, Griffin notes that "he falls in the bounty that the garden lavishes on him. He is no ungrateful lover. The fall, rather than constraining him, leads him to a depth of thought and creativity that transcends all other experience" (49). Indeed, after his fall, the narrator's soul detaches itself from his body:

> There like a Bird it sits, and sings,
> Then whets, and combs its silver Wings;
> And, till prepar'd for longer flight,
> Waves in its Plumes the various Light (VII 5-8)

The narrator's soul preparing for longer flight suggests an ascension to Heaven, perhaps earned through his devotion to the garden and his attempt to restore the faults of Adam and Eve.

This is affirmed by the following stanza, in which Marvell makes a direct reference to the book of Genesis, the garden of Eden and Adam and Eve:

> Such was that happy Garden-state,
> While Man there walked without a Mate:
> After a place, so pure and sweet,
> What other Help could yet be meet!
> But 'twas beyond a Mortal's share
> To wander solitary there:

Two Paradises ‘twere in one
To live in Paradise alone (VIII 1-8)

With “that happy Garden-state” (VIII-1), Marvell explicitly references the garden of Eden, “Man” and “a Mate” (VIII-2) referring to Adam and Eve. This confirms the cloaked comparisons to the garden of Eden in earlier stanzas. The narrator’s suggestion that Adam would have been better off living in Eden without Eve, a notion of which John Hollander and Frank Kermode believe that it reflects misogynistic views. Since Eve was tempted by the serpent, and it was Eve who tempted Adam to taste the fruit, Marvell might suggest that if Adam had remained alone in Eden, he would not have succumbed to temptation and Paradise would have remained intact. About this stanza, Griffin notes that “it is not the first Eden, but an artful re-creation for which there should be no need if man had never fallen and the original still existed. Thus, art may be considered a result of the fall. Within its power is the ability to create a new Eden” (50). Griffin thus also acknowledges and confirms the vitalism in the poem. Andrew Marvell’s *The Garden* provides a good example of early modern pastoral poetry, which offers commentary on the poet’s society and the movement of vitalist materialism in the mid seventeenth-century. Not only does Marvell thoroughly make use of natural symbolisms, but also of Biblical references to the garden of Eden which are reminiscent of Paradise as depicted in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

While the pastoral obviously evokes a sense of nostalgia to simpler times, McColley goes on to argue that seventeenth-century poets went even beyond the pastoral genre to “encompass ethical consideration of the natural world itself” (57). McColley observes that poets of this era openly “questioned the dominion of human beings over other beings at a time when mechanistic and imperialistic attitudes toward nature were just getting started” (57). The example she presents to support her claim is Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. According to McColley the epic “encompasses [ecology’s] etymological meaning of knowledge of the household, or

shared habitat, of Earth in language ethically responsive to the diversity, connectedness, and well-being of Earth's offspring" (58).

Nature was thus a widely used theme in seventeenth-century poetry, and according to McColley particularly Milton explored this topic in great detail in his *Paradise Lost*. Likewise, as in *Paradise Lost*, Biblical narrative was often used as a basis for different kinds of art forms.

1.5 The Fall in Early Modern poetry

The Bible was indeed an abundantly used source of inspiration for many artists, poets and authors. Many poems contain Biblical allusions, and particularly the story of Genesis, of Creation, original sin and humanity's fall are commonly used source material. In fact, Adam and Eve's fall and their expulsion from Eden is "one of the most common motifs and subjects for art and literature in the early modern period" (Miller 64). As seen previously, *The Garden* by Andrew Marvell contains allusions to the story of humanity's fall. Many works of Early Modern pastoral poetry contained references to Paradise, even branching out to the genre of Edenic pastoral.

Shannon Miller observes that the story of the fall provided "the basis of much seventeenth-century political thought: Robert Filmer and John Locke both positioned this narrative at the center of debates about political organization and legitimacy" (64). For example, both Filmer and Locke used the narrative specifically to position marriage – and the respective positions of men and women within marriage – as a primary element in social structure (Miller 1).

She notes that simultaneously the Fall narrative was used by a number of female authors throughout the seventeenth century. Miller names Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam and Aemilia Lanyer as using the narrative to "discuss women's engagement in political

involvement and issues of authority" (64). She further discusses Lucy Hutchinson and Margaret Cavendish, who, later in the century, "deploy portraits of Eve to intervene in the very debates that mark Robert Filmer's monarchical and John Locke's republican writings" (64). The female authors thus direct their focus on the female character of Eve to comment on women's roles in political society. Miller makes the observation that these female authors may have done so to remind readers of the fact that "the very basis of political organization depends on [women's] position within the social fabric of the family and, by extension, the state" (66).

In the poem *Eve's Apology in Defense of Women,* Lanyer gives a voice to Pontius Pilate's wife, as she is begging for mercy on Jesus's behalf. While the poem is framed as a retelling of the passion of Christ, Pilate's wife implores her husband to listen by using Eve's transgression as a means of convincing him to spare Jesus. About this poem, Miller notes that "Lanyer strengthens women's worth more broadly by foregrounding their role as defenders of Christ" (55).

> Our mother Eve, who tasted of the tree,
> Giving to Adam what she held most dear,
> Was simply good, and had no power to see;
> The after-coming harm did not appear:
> The subtle serpent that our sex betrayed
> Before our fall so sure a plot had laid (III 3-8)

The speaker defends Eve and argues for her innocence. Eve had no notion of the consequences that would follow, and only offered the fruit to Adam out of goodness and love for her companion.

In the following stanza, the speaker argues that had she known of the consequences, she would not have taken the fruit: For had she known of what we were bereaved, / To this

request she had not condescended" (IV 3-4). The speaker then attempts to shift the blame to Adam, and the tone of the speaker shifts to sarcasm. After all, the most important point she makes to argue her point is that men are stronger and superior to women.

> But surely Adam cannot be excused;
> Her fault though great, yet he was most to blame.
> What weakness offered, strength might have refused;
> Being lord of all, the greater was his shame;
> Although the serpent's craft had her abused,
> God's holy word ought all his actions frame;
> For he was lord and king of all the earth,
> Before poor Eve had either life or breath (V 1-8)

The speaker does not fully take away all Eve's responsibility, but effectively shifts the focus to Adam by claiming his dominion over his wife, and thus leaving the suggestion that he should have known better. She condemns Adam for not resisting temptation and argues that his shame is therefore far greater than Eve's. It is obvious that Lanyer herself does not believe in the inferiority of women, but by using this sarcastic tone in her poem, the point comes across even more effectively.

This is reiterated in the following stanza, where the speaker points out: "No subtle serpent's falsehood did betray him; / If he would eat it, who had power to stay him?" (VI 7-8). The speaker then goes even further, by blaming men for a worse transgression than the original sin, which Eve committed in goodness and innocence, namely the 'malicious' betrayal of Christ.

> Whom, if unjustly you condemn to die,
> Her sin was small to what you do commit.
> All mortal sins that do for vengeance cry
> Are not to be compared unto it;

> If many worlds would altogether try
> By all their sins the wrath of God to get,
> This sin of yours surmounts them all as far
> As doth the sun another little star (IX 1-8)

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar note that the poem serves as a "pioneering vindication of the rights of [Eve]" (35), and about this particular stanza Gilbert and Gubar observe that "Eve's primordial female act of "betrayal" was performed in unconscious innocence, while men are more culpable because they consciously betrayed Jesus Christ to his crucifixion" (35), this is reiterated in the penultimate stanza, where the speaker points out: "If one weak woman simply did offend, / This sin of yours hath no excuse nor end" (X 7-8). The speaker in the poem thus emphasises that men have committed the greater sin and are more culpable for the original sin than is widely believed.

1.6 Conclusion

There was a notable concern with the preservation of nature in seventeenth-century England. It has been shown that nature was increasingly being utilised for mainly economic and scientific ends during this era. Interpretations of the Bible played a hand in this, as common interpretations of Genesis seemingly justified humanity's dominion over nature. There were several people openly outspoken about this issue, and there was a considerable debate. In addition, there was a large wave of vitalism mid seventeenth century. Not only poets attributed emotion to nature to explore its relationship to humanity, but so did pre-scientists and physicians. In fact, this movement was even seeking to restore Eden and undo the mistakes made by Adam and Eve. A notion which is exemplified in Marvell's pastoral poem *The Garden*.

As established earlier in this chapter, this environmentalist concern was particularly voiced in pastoral poetry, which often also made Biblical allusions to the garden of Eden. This

again emphasises the vitalist movement seeking to restore Paradise. Early modern pastoral poetry expressed a kind of nostalgia about a simpler rural time and environment. *Paradise Lost* combines the two themes discussed in this chapter, namely the Biblical narrative of Creation and the Fall, and a view on humanity's relationship to their natural environment.

Milton was very vocal about his personal views on several controversial matters in his prose works. However, in *Paradise Lost*, many of these same issues are addressed. Using the cultural-historical context from this first chapter as a basis, the second chapter will examine prelapsarian *Paradise Lost*. Here, a focus will be placed on humanity's relationship to its environment. Moreover, it will examine the religious implications of the poem's attitude towards humanity's natural environment within its inherently Christian context.

2. *PARADISE LOST* I: BEFORE THE FALL

The first chapter examined the cultural-historical context of early modernity, and specifically the seventeenth century. As has been established in the first chapter, there was wide concern for the preservation of nature in England, which was mainly being used for proto-industrial purposes. One of the reasons for this was the common interpretation of Genesis 1:28, which led to the notion that humanity could rightfully exercise dominion over the rest of nature. Simultaneously there was a large movement of vitalism during the mid-seventeenth century, which argued that "spirit is a refined form of matter, that all creation partakes of spirit in varying degrees, and that all created beings therefore have free will, the ability to perceive and make moral choices and to exert material agency" (Marcus 98). This vitalism was present in science as well as poetry, a good example of this is *Paradise Lost*.

In *Paradise Lost,* Milton tells the story of Creation. God creates Adam and Eve and they are given the task of tending to the garden of Eden. Because of this responsibility, Adam and Eve logically develop a certain relationship with their environment. However, arguably their environment likewise develops a certain relationship with Adam and Eve. This reciprocal relationship suggests something other than the dominion over nature which is left to individual interpretation in Genesis 1:28.

This chapter will first look at the explicit descriptions of the garden of Eden. It will then look at the relationship between Adam and Eve and the Garden itself, judging from their position within the hierarchy of their environment and their responsibilities towards the Garden. Based upon this, the question of what Eden represents and why it needs to be restored after it is lost will be answered.

2.1 The garden of Eden

It is not until Book IV that Milton offers the first descriptions of the garden of Eden, when Satan descends to Eden. It is important to note that the descriptions of Satan are all provided

from his perspective, perhaps "not through the distorting lens of Satan's eyes … but over his shoulder" (Samuel 20).

Upon Satan's descent, the narrator uses the following phrase: "So on he fares, and to the border comes / of Eden, where delicious Paradise, / Now nearer, Crowns with her enclosure green" (IV.131-3). By providing the descriptor "delicious" (IV.132) upon first mentioning the garden of Eden, Milton offers an expected opening to his introduction of paradise. However, when further describing the outside appearance of the garden of Eden Milton uses terms which might challenge the conventional image of prelapsarian Paradise, as often seen in art or read about in poetry: "Of a steep wilderness, whose hairie sides / With thicket overgrown, grottesque and wilde" (IV.135-6). By using words like "overgrown" and "grottesque", Milton suggests an impenetrable outside appearance which implies all inhabitants to be safe from unwanted visitors from outside, and indeed: "Access deni'd" (IV.137).

The description goes on as follows: "a woodie Theatre / of stateliest view" (IV.141-2), "a circling row / Of goodliest Trees loaden with fairest Fruit" (IV.147-8), and "Blossoms and Fruits at once of golden hue / Appeerd, with gay enameld colours mixt" (IV.148-9). These descriptions would be recognisable to a seventeenth-century contemporary reader. After all, the garden of Eden was a commonly used theme for many visual and literary works of art. Even Satan admires the sight: "Beneath him with new wonder now he views / To all delight of human sense expos'd / In narrow room Natures whole wealth, yea more, / A Heaven on Earth, for blissful Paradise / Of God the Garden was" (IV.205-9). Paradise is depicted as pure and unspoiled, a true Heaven on Earth.

Of Milton's garden of Eden, Hiltner notes that his "depiction of Paradise owed much to the pastoral tradition" (90). Hilter further points out that while Milton abundantly uses classical references, the final picture he provides of Eden is reminiscent of the English

countryside. The following excerpt is also reminiscent of Marvell's *The Garden*. While Marvell's poem clearly acts as a replacement, and the splendour of the 'real' Garden cannot literally be recreated, the way the description flows is very similar. Indeed, Milton uses expressive language which is much like that of other seventeenth-century pastoral poetry, like *The Garden,* creating a visual scene:

> Thus was this place,
> A happy rural seat of various view;
> Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gumms and Balme,
> Others whose fruit burnish with Golden Rinde
> Hung amiable, Hesperian Fables true,
> If true, here only, and of delicious taste:
> Betwixt them Lawns, or level Downs, and Flocks
> Grasing the tender herb, were interpos'd,
> Or palmie hilloc, or flourie lap
> Of som irriguous Valley spred her store,
> Flours of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose (IV.246-56)

About this passage, Luxon notes Milton's use of "happy rural seat" (IV.247). Luxon points out that Milton here "invites comparison of Adam and Eve's "happy rural seat" to country estates famous in his time". Hiltner links Milton's use of the pastoral tradition to the "variety of environmental crises that were already threatening the picturesque countrysides of such descriptions" (91) in the seventeenth century. As such, Milton here evokes the same kind of nostalgia as in other pastoral poetry, and by evoking this sentiment seemingly puts forward the same attitude as other seventeenth-century poets: wishing for a return to simpler times, before dramatic environmental changes. Or, in this case, wishing for a return to how life was before the fall. Indeed, Hiltner argues that "Milton's poetry may be the most nostalgic of all, finding in our past an unrivalled Paradise, lost through our own folly" (3). As such, Marcus's

theory of Milton's vitalism is relevant when analysing his descriptions of the garden. His descriptions might be read as an attempt to remind readers of what once was, and what might one day be again. His luscious portrayal of Paradise might evoke this great sense of nostalgia with his contemporaries as explained by Hiltner.

2.2 Adam and Eve's position within the garden of Eden

Not only does book IV offer the reader a first glimpse into the garden of Eden, it also provides a first look at Adam and Eve. In the initial outward description of the garden of Eden, Adam's rank in this new world is established as that of an emperor: "The verdurous wall of paradise up sprung: / Which to our general Sire gave prospect large / Into his neather Empire neighbouring round" (IV.143-5). The idea of Adam as an emperor of this new world, with Eden as his 'palace', is again reminiscent of Genesis 1:28, where God orders Adam to "have dominion" over all of creation. Furthermore, it corresponds to the divine right of kings. Satan observes Eden, and even before seeing Adam, infers him to be like an emperor. God must have intended for Adam to rule the Earth, with God as his sole authority. This corresponds to the divine right of kings, something which Milton controversially denied in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. By having Satan come to this conclusion about Adam, the narrative suggests that this might be because of his status as a 'fallen' creature.

Later, Satan invades the garden to see God's new creation, and perception shifts to Satan: "From this Assyrian Garden, where the Fiend / Saw undelighted all delight, all kind / Of living Creatures new to sight and strange" (IV.285-7). Indeed, Stephen B. Dobranski notes that "our view of […] Adam and Eve is accordingly coloured by our alliance with Satan's voyeuristic perspective: unlike Satan, we are able to take delight in the delightful landscape, but our view is restricted to what he is able to see" (163). This shift to Satan's perspective might challenge the reliability of the reader's view of Adam and Eve.

Satan characterises Adam and Eve as such: “all kind / Of living Creatures new to sight and strange: / Two of far nobler shape erect and tall, / Godlike erect, with native Honour clad / In naked Majestie seemd Lords of all” (IV.287-90). This introduction of Adam and Eve establishes their position in relation to nature in Paradise, as seeming “Lords of all”. Of course, this is again an observation made by Satan, who, like all readers of *Paradise Lost*, is a fallen creature. Perhaps then, the common interpretation of Genesis 1:28 of humanity’s dominion over nature, is only a natural ‘fallen’ reaction.

As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that Adam and Eve cannot be said to dominate their environment. While there is a certain hierarchy in place regarding humanity and nature, Adam and Eve do not seem to exercise this higher ‘rank’. Instead, the relationship between them and nature seems reciprocal rather than hierarchical: “to thir Supper Fruits they fell, / Nectarine Fruits which the compliant boughes / *Yielded* them” (IV.331-3; emphasis added). This passage shows Adam and Eve resting from their “sweet Gardning labour” (IV.328), after which Paradise seems to repay their efforts in yielding them its fruit. This is reiterated later in Book V, when Eve brings Adam and the archangel Raphael supper: “Whatever Earth all-bearing Mother yields” (V.338). By using these kinds of personifications in his descriptions of the flora and fauna in Paradise, Milton makes the garden of Eden a character in its own right; a consciousness created by God like Adam and Eve themselves. In some passages, plants are attributed a gender, and agency: “the mantling vine / Layes forth her purple Grape, and gently creeps / Luxuriant” (IV.258-60). Milton’s vitalism is visible in his portrayal of humanity’s environment in this way. While the dynamics of the relationship between the two humans and nature might go unnoticed by Satan, the knowledge that the garden of Eden is a living, breathing consciousness makes sure this does not go unnoticed by the reader. It appears that Adam and Eve rely as much on the garden as the garden relies on them.

While humanity appears to Satan as “far nobler” and “Lords of all”, it becomes clear from their interactions with Eden’s flora and fauna that *Paradise Lost*’s Adam and Eve’s relationship to nature is on a more equal footing than Genesis’s Adam and Eve’s implied relationship to their environment. This observation by Satan does not correspond with how the relationship between Adam and Eve and their environment is portrayed in *Paradise Lost*. While Adam and Eve are arguably of higher ‘rank’ than the flora and fauna in the garden, the narrative does not suggest any literal domination of the humans over plants and animals, and instead emphasises their mutual dependency. Indeed, McColley points out that “Milton’s environmental ethic is the more striking if we consider the intellectual tide against which he strove […] which made nature a storehouse of commodities to be extracted by technology; an expanding interpretation of the ‘dominion’ over nature given in Genesis as encouragement to shape all habitats for human use” (157). Satan’s assertion of human dominion over nature likely corresponded with the ideas of most of Milton’s contemporary readers. This is corroborated by Irene Samuel, who notes that Milton might have deliberately framed this narrative from Satan’s fallen perspective to correspond with that of his contemporary readers, who are likewise fallen creatures (20). Moreover, even Adam tells Eve: “Dominion giv’n / Over all other Creatures that possess / Earth, Aire, and Sea” (IV.430-1), however McColley argues that “[t]he animals are naturally obedient to Adam and Eve but are not subservient to them” (60). Furthermore, in his narrative, Milton contradicts this notion of human dominion by establishing a respectfully harmonious reciprocal relationship between Adam and Eve and the animals and plants in the garden of Eden. Indeed, McColley attributes their authority to their likeness to God, and notes that “Adam and Eve do not use animals for the usual fallen purposes of food, clothing, labour, and war. […] They are not servants to human beings; human beings serve them by preserving their shared environment in pristine biodiversity” (61).

By only asserting human dominion through Satan's observations, rather than through actual exposition, the poem suggests an equal relationship between the garden of Eden and its two inhabitants. As such, Milton subverts the common interpretation of Genesis 1:28 in his narrative. Before the Fall, there is no notion of human dominance of nature. Instead, the reciprocal relationship between Adam and Eve and their environment receives due emphasis. Based upon the wave of vitalism in the mid seventeenth century and, according to Marcus, Milton's involvement within this movement seeking to restore Eden. Within this context, it may be argued that Milton here asserts an ideal relationship between humanity and their environment: a custodial, and mutually respectful relationship.

2.3 The responsibilities of Adam and Eve towards their environment

In this relationship between the two humans and nature, Adam and Eve have their own responsibilities. Indeed, upon their first exposition in the narrative, Adam and Eve are resting form their "sweet Gardning labour" (IV.328). Ellen Goodman argues that while humans may be above the flora and fauna in Eden, there is a dynamic of them working together: Adam and Eve provide gardening, and the plants provide the couple's nurture (13). This co-dependency is logical considering Adam and Eve's fructarian diet. In prelapsarian Eden, Adam and Eve's work is one of their defining features. Adam states that they were instructed by God to tend to the garden: "But let us ever praise him, and extoll / His bountie, following our delightful task / To prune these growing Plants, and tend these Flours, / Which were it toilsom, yet with thee were sweet" (IV. 436-9). Adam and Eve are thus duty-bound to tend to the garden. Nevertheless, Adam and Eve delight in their labour, made clear by the use of terms such as: "delightful task" (IV.437). Their responsibilities seem a combination of obligation, duty and enjoyment. At times, the terms used to describe their tending to the plants even recall to parents doing what they think best for their child: "And at our pleasant labour, to reform / Yon flourie Arbors, yonder Allies green" (IV.625-6). Adam even mentions that they will need

the help of their 'human' children if they are ever going to fully perfect the garden, which shows their willingness to be obedient to God, and their commitment to the task of tending to Paradise.

Adam and Eve's responsibilities reflect the same notion as established in the previous paragraph. The relationship is reciprocal, meaning that Adam and Eve provide for the garden, and the garden in turn provides for them. The notion of Adam and Eve's dominion over the rest of God's creation is then again subverted. Because this prelapsarian world is the ideal, the poem again suggests that this is what should be striven for in a contemporary society.

2.4 Vitalist materialism and monism in prelapsarian *Paradise Lost*

As previously established in Milton's depiction of the Garden, *Paradise Lost* contains several allusions to the seventeenth-century wave of animist or vitalist materialism. Dennis Danielson notes that this is perhaps best illustrated by the epic's portrayal of the angels, arguing that their portrayal assert that "there is no radical separation of nor contradiction between the physical and the spiritual" (144). However, this animist or vitalist materialism is also seen in the prelapsarian garden of Eden. The concept has already been established in the framing of the description of the garden, with its similarities to Marvell's *The Garden*.

However, there is more evidence of *Paradise Lost's* vitalist tendencies. Vitalism attributes a spiritual quality to objects, places and creatures and in that sense all things are perceived as animate and alive. In the prelapsarian garden of Eden, Milton uses a plethora of personifications which provides the garden with a voice and agency of its own. The Earth, the Sun and even plants are portrayed as sentient beings. Adam and Eve treat their environment as such, they are respectful and recognise their mutual dependency. Especially Eve's relationship to her environment, which is alike that of a mother and her child. Adam and Eve's connectedness to their place reflects an animist or vitalist ideology. Their bower is sacred, and they are only able to use those parts of nature which nature willingly yields to

them. The greatest emphasis lies on the reciprocity between the human characters and the rest of nature.

Milton is well-known for his monism, which is arguably presupposed by vitalism. Monism is not generally found in Christianity, instead, it is often found to be unbiblical as it rejects a distinction between God and Creation. *Paradise Lost* unites the two philosophical theories of vitalism and monism fittingly. All of Creation is thoroughly *of* God, and therefore all created beings have sentience and free will.

Milton writes about monism in *Christian Doctrine:*

> Man is a living being, intrinsically and properly one and individual. He is not double or separable: not, as is commonly thought, produced from and composed of two distinct and different elements, soul and body. On the contrary, the whole man is soul, and the soul man: a body, in other words, or individual substance: animated, sensitive, and rational (Milton 318)

Christian Doctrine was published posthumously, and William Kerrigan, John Rumrich and Stephen M. Fallon note in their introduction that "[h]ad Milton himself attempted to publish the treatise during the Restoration, its heretical contents would likely have caused him serious trouble" (389). Despite the controversiality of this school of thought, Milton's monism finds its way into *Paradise Lost*.

In fact, Noam Reisner notes that, in order to understand *Paradise Lost* fully, one needs to recognise "Milton's belief that the entire created universe, and man especially, is part of a unified material continuum, where spirit (soul) and matter (body) are relative degrees rather than opposites, and where all created beings aspire to return to the single perfection and material unity of the one true God" (9). Indeed, in the excerpt from book V, this notion is voiced quite explicitly:

> O Adam, one Almightie is, from whom
> All things proceed, and up to him return,

> If not deprav'd from good, created all
> Such to perfection, one first matter all,
> Indu'd with various forms, various degrees
> Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
> But more refin'd, more spiritous, and pure,
> As nearer to him plac't or nearer tending (V.469-76)

Especially the phrase "one first matter all" (V.472), meaning God himself, is suggestive of Milton's monism. However, Milton's monism is visible in several other passages, specifically in his portrayal of the angels. This likewise confirms that monism and vitalism go hand in hand. For example, in book V, Milton describes Raphael and Adam having dinner: "So down they sat, / And to thir viands fell, nor seemingly / The Angel, nor in mist, the common gloss / Of Theologians, but with keen dispatch / Of real hunger, and concoctive heate / To transubstantiate; what redounds, transpires / Through Spirits with ease" (V. 433-9). Likewise, in book VIII, angelic lovemaking is described:

> Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
> (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
> In eminence, and obstacle find none
> Of membrane, joynt, or limb, exclusive barrs:
> Easier then Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,
> Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure
> Desiring; nor restrain'd conveyance need
> As Flesh to mix with Flesh, or Soul with Soul (VIII.622-9)

Milton's monism seemingly forms the basis of the structure of *Paradise Lost's* universe. All living beings are derived from God himself, and Milton uses it to "shape his construction of human nature" (Trubowitz 393).

Vitalism and monism can be closely connected, as seen in *Paradise Lost*. Milton's monism establishes the foundation of *Paradise Lost*'s world, all created beings are thoroughly of God himself. This is asserted by Milton's vitalism, which establishes that "all creation partakes of spirit in varying degrees" (Marcus 98). The Garden is seemingly alive, and all of nature is arguably a character in its own right. This is confirmed through the reciprocity between Adam and Eve and the rest of nature before the Fall.

2.5 Adam and Eve's relationship to their Environment

The close relationship between Adam and Eve and their natural environment becomes clear in multiple passages. As established earlier, this is shown by means of the mutual dependency in the relationship between humanity and nature. Marcus notes that Milton "creates – or awakens – an animate, vitalist universe" (105), which is aptly exemplified in the following excerpt. Moreover, this passage is perhaps also the best example which illustrates the closeness of the prelapsarian relationship between Adam and Eve and the rest of nature. Indeed, in this passage, it becomes evident that before their transgression, the garden of Eden celebrates and responds to Adam and Eve:

> the Earth
> Gave sign of gratulation, and each Hill;
> Joyous the Birds; fresh Gales and gentle Aires
> Whisper'd it to the Woods, and from thir wings
> Flung Rose, flung Odours from the spicie Shrub,
> Disporting, till the amorous Bird of Night
> Sung Spousal, and bid haste the Eevning Starr
> On his Hill top, to light the bridal lamp. (VIII.513-20)

In this example, which recounts their wedding night, all of nature joins Adam and Eve in their joy. Milton's vitalism, as described by Marcus, is perhaps best visible in this portrayal of nature's rejoice at Adam and Eve's union. Milton uses a personification to emphasise Earth

and nature as a creation of God, as much as humanity is a creation of God. Throughout the narrative, Earth has been "animate and mindful" (DuRocher 99); moreover she has been compliant and obedient to God: "The Earth obey'd, and strait / Op'ning her fertile Woomb teem'd at a Birth / Innumerous living Creatures, perfet forms, / Lim'd and full grown" (VII.453-6). This implies that God did not 'open her fertile womb', but rather – upon God's request – the sentient Earth did so herself. Furthermore, she has been attributed emotions: "Earth in her rich attire / Consummate lovly smil'd" (VII.501-2). In the context of the poem, she is thus a sentient being with a close relationship to the creatures that live on Earth. By applying these vitalist personifications to Earth, Milton adds to the tragedy of humanity's Fall.

When the epic poem reaches its climax, namely when Eve first eats from the Tree of Knowledge, this link with nature is still there. However, from its reaction it becomes clear that this link will soon be severed: "her rash hand in evil hour / Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat: / Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat / Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe, / That all was lost" (IX.780-4). Immediately, the sense of the loss of connectedness with Earth and humanity is visible. Hiltner considers Eve's fall an uprooting (43). Eve's prelapsarian connectedness to Earth is undeniable, as is evident from the several instances where she appears as a maternal figure to nature in Paradise. Hiltner makes the point that "Eve is thoroughly *of* the Garden. Not only is she cast in language as a flower, but her effect on the flowers […] and their effect on her […] suggests that Eve has (to borrow Spengler's words) "roots in the earth that [s]he tends," an "earth-boundness of being"" (45). Indeed, within the vitalist and monist context, Eve is no different from the Garden. Within the narrative, they are all created from the same spirit, and contain a similar spirit.

Nevertheless, Satan is able to convince Eve to pull free from her place in the garden of Eden, by tempting her with knowledge. Knowledge which, according to Hiltner, is "not a knowledge of the Garden and Creation itself […], but what immediately after her Fall she

believes is within her grasp: […] knowledge reserved for a *Creator*" (45). Indeed, Eve is tempted by Satan to taste from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil mainly by his claims of knowledge. In his argument, Satan even seems to use Milton's own arguments from the *Areopagitica*. Satan argues: "knowledge of Good and Evil; / Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil / Be real, why not known, since easier shunnd?" (IX.697-9). Satan's temptation takes the form of logic, albeit faulty logic. Hiltner's point about eagerness to access the "knowledge reserved for a *Creator*" (45) is made clear immediately after Eve eats the fruit, as her first thought expresses her "expectation high / Of knowledg, nor was God-head from her thought" (IX.789-90).

The notion that Eve's fall was caused due to her wish to rise up from her place on earth is in stark contrast with what medieval theology interpreted as the Fall, which was considered as "humanity giving in to the temptation of the "earthly" flesh – and in so doing cast much that is of the Earth as not only inferior and suspect but evil" (Hiltner 3). It is this uprooting of Eve, Hiltner argues, that causes the Earth to feel its wound. As the garden of Eden has been personified throughout the narrative, this pain felt by the Earth adds more depth to the Fall for the reader. Moreover, Richard J. DuRocher notes that Milton's personification "shifts the focus away from the immediate human drama to show that human sin somehow injures the natural world" (95). The Fall is thus not strictly a human drama, but also a natural one. Moreover, due to the close connection between humanity and nature, the consequences of the Fall are not limited to humanity.

This notion is reiterated when Adam is persuaded to eat from the forbidden fruit: "Earth trembl'd from her entrails, as again / In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan, / Skie lowr'd, and muttering Thunder, som sad drops / Wept at compleating of the mortal Sin / Original; while Adam took no thought, / Eating his fill" (IX.1000-5). The reactions of Nature and Earth further establish the vitalism in Milton's epic, because they react of their own

volition, suggesting their moral sentience. Indeed, Marcus notes that "the act of Adam and Eve initiates a wave of sympathetic deterioration by which the earth and Nature respond incrementally to the humans' initial transgression" (99). In relation to Adam's Fall, DuRocher presents an interpretation, based on the personification of Earth, in which Adam and Eve's Fall is interpreted as childbirth. This implies that the Fall thus causes the Earth to reverse Creation, or as DuRocher calls it "a forced re-enactment of her part in Creation" (101). In support of DuRocher's interpretation, Hiltner notes that "Milton's use of "pangs" to describe what the Earth felt is telling, since from the sixteenth century through Milton's time "pangs" was limited to either "death pangs" or "pangs of childbirth"" (49). Hiltner relates the Fall to the loss of a child, where pain is felt in the mother, as well as the child (49). In the case of *Paradise Lost*, it is Mother Earth, who feels the loss of her children, Adam and Eve, and vice versa. Hiltner does note that this pain of loss is what keeps Earth and the two human characters together. Moreover, the implication of the childbirth interpretation is that "bringing forth children in sorrow is an attempt by God not to punish, but to remind, so that each new generation might be brought forth in the memory of what befell the Earth through our Original Sin" (Hiltner 50). While the relationship with the Earth thus seems irrevocably altered, the connection between humanity and nature remains present.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between Adam and Eve and the rest of nature before the Fall. It has established the inherently reciprocal and custodial relationship between the two. By depicting this prelapsarian relationship in this way, the poem arguably suggests that the ideal relationship between humanity and the rest of nature is as depicted in *Paradise Lost*.

Throughout the narrative of *Paradise Lost* before the Fall, vitalist characteristics are noticeable. The initial depiction of the garden of Eden is reminiscent of seventeenth-century

pastoral poetry, and thus evokes a tremendous sense of nostalgia. Personifications are used throughout, providing the flora and fauna in the garden with agency, morality and free will. By doing so, the narrative places great emphasis on the reciprocity and mutual dependency of the relationship between the two humans and the rest of nature. It thus also places a considerable focus on human responsibility towards their natural environment. In the context of the poem, and the vitalist movement, Eden may thus symbolise human benevolence and custody towards their natural environment, and the need for its restoration may then thus be rooted in these seventeenth-century environmental changes.

The following chapter will examine *Paradise Lost* after the Fall, and the significant changes that take place after Adam and Eve's transgression. It will look at the effects of the Fall, the changed relationship, and the changes in the world altogether. Furthermore, it will look at a potential restoration of Eden.

3. *PARADISE LOST* II: AFTER THE FALL

In the previous chapter, the ideal relationship between humanity and their natural environment was established. Furthermore, the poem stresses human responsibility towards nature and vice versa. The relationship between the two can be characterised as mutually dependent and reciprocal. Throughout the prelapsarian narrative, the poem supplies vitalist characteristics to different parts of nature through personifications. Moreover, Earth's involuntary reaction upon both Eve and Adam's transgression suggests a moral sentience which corresponds to vitalist theory.

After the Fall, seemingly irrevocable changes take place in this dynamic between humanity and the rest of nature. This happens because of ecological changes that occur in the natural world, and as a result, nature seemingly turns its back on Adam and Eve. This chapter will examine these changes and their implications for future generations.

3.1 Humanity and their Environment: an altered relationship

After Adam and Eve's transgression, God is implied to have instructed the angels to make certain changes to the natural world, which have serious implications for life on Earth. Immediately after eating from the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve do not seem aware of any changes, and instead they are in a blissful state: "Much pleasure we have lost, while we abstain'd / From this delightful Fruit, nor known till now / True relish, tasting; if such pleasure be / In things to us forbidden, it might be wish'd, / For this one Tree had bin forbidden ten" (IX.1022-6). The perfectly delightful and happy state they felt in prelapsarian Eden seems to have been nothing compared to what they now feel: "For never did thy Beautie since the day / I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorn'd / With all perfections, so enflame my sense / With ardour to enjoy thee, fairer now / Then ever, bountie of this vertuous Tree" (IX.1029-33). The obsessive desire which they now project upon each other is a stark contrast to the holy lovemaking from before the Fall. These passages suggest the moment they turn

their back on the garden they lovingly tended to before, and with which they had a suggested maternal and paternal relationship. This sensation does not last long, as the next morning they wake up and the realisation of the gravity of their actions set in:

> Soon found thir Eyes how op'nd, and thir minds
> How dark'nd; innocence, that as a veile
> Had shadow'd them from knowing ill, was gon,
> Just confidence, and native righteousness
> And honour from about them, naked left
> To guiltie shame hee cover'd (IX.1053-8)

At first, Adam and Eve only seem concerned with their newfound knowledge of good and evil, and the loss of "Honour", "Innocence", "Faith" and "Puritie" (IX.74-5). Adam and Eve show a range of feelings they have not been capable of before, which shows that the Fall has brought about a serious psychological change. Adam and Eve do not yet seem to notice any changes in their environment, nor do they worry about imminent changes in their environment. However, a change in their attitude towards nature is made visible. Whereas in prelapsarian Eden, Adam and Eve only used plants and trees for their fruits, for sustenance, now they turn to "The Figtree, not that kind for Fruit renown'd" (IX.1101) in order to create something to cover up their nakedness: "Some Tree whose broad smooth Leaves together sowd, / And girded on our loyns, may cover round / Those middle parts, that this new commer, Shame, / There sit not, and reproach us as unclean" (IX.1095-98). Adam and Eve turning to a fruitless tree, or at least a tree not suitable for nurture, is telling. They have turned to nature for Fallen purposes, such as clothes. In this way, they disrupt and destroy a part of nature because of their sin.

The moment Adam and Eve have covered themselves with leaves, Milton draws a comparison to native Americans: "Such of late *Columbus* found th' *American* so girt / With featherd Cincture, naked else and wilde" (1115-6). In his annotation to this passage, Luxon

states that Milton deliberately links this postlapsarian, “newly-fallen, lust-driven [and] shameful”, Adam to the natives of the New World, who were starting to be more often regarded as innocent, like prelapsarian Adam. By stating this so explicitly Milton suggests native Americans to be wicked, barbaric and disgraceful, and their society’s to be lacking in civility. As such, in Book X, the Son provides Adam and Eve with a more appropriate, albeit by standards of western society, way of covering up their shame, namely by using the skins of animals:

> As Father of his Familie he clad
> Thir nakedness with Skins of Beasts, or slain,
> Or as the Snake with youthful Coate repaid;
> And thought not much to cloath his Enemies:
> Nor hee thir outward onely with the Skins
> Of Beasts, but inward nakedness, much more
> Opprobrious, with his Robe of righteousness,
> Araying cover’d from his Fathers sight (X.216-23)

By having Adam and Eve immediately change into more appropriate clothes, Milton reiterates the lack of civility. Moreover, this also serves to again show a change in their relationship to their Environment, as this is the moment Adam and Eve start to use animals for fallen purposes.

However, there has not only been a change in their attitude towards their environment; Nature itself has changed. When God orders the Son to judge Adam and Eve after their transgression, he tells them of several natural changes. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve enjoyed a loving and harmonious relationship with nature, which was fully compliant. As long as Adam and Eve tended to the plants and trees, nature readily yielded its fruit to them. However, the Son’s announcements imply that the compliance of nature has gone: “Curs’d is the ground for thy sake, thou in sorrow / Shalt eate thereof all the days of thy Life; / Thorns

also and Thistles it shall bring thee forth / Unbid, and thou shalt eate th' Herb of th' Field, / In the sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread, / Till thou return unto the ground" (X.201-06). This passage shows the divide that has been created between nature and humanity. Adam and Eve will now have to struggle in their labour to feed themselves, whereas their work was first regarded as a source of delight. The reciprocity of their relationship to Nature has disappeared, humanity still needs Nature, yet Nature does not seem to need them anymore.

Through their Fall, Adam and Eve allowed Sin, Death and Discord into the world. The portrayal of their dismissal from Hell again shows a vitalist characteristic to the narrative, as the planets respond in horror: "they with speed / Thir course through thickest Constellations held / Spreading thir bane; the blasted Starrs lookt wan, / And Planets, Planet-strook, real Eclips / Then sufferd" (X.410-4). The planets are ascribed agency and moral awareness. It is then Discord that causes significant changes in the animal kingdom on Earth, which Adam observes with horror:

> Beast now with Beast gan war, and Fowle with Fowle,
> And Fish with Fish; to graze the Herb all leaving,
> Devourd each other; nor stood much in awe
> Of Man, but fled him, or with count'nance grim
> Glar'd on him passing (X.710-14)

The prelapsarian harmony between humans and animals has disappeared. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were able to understand and communicate with animals, and the animals were even naturally obedient to them. The animals' new attitude towards mankind; as they "fled him" (X.713), or "Glar'd on him passing" (X.714), suggests the animals' awareness of the new dynamic between them and humans. After all, because of the Fall, humans will start hunting and domesticating animals for their own benefit. The harmony that was found in

nature before, in both flora and fauna, has made place for self-defence and hostility because of their disobedience.

3.2 Effects on the vitalist Earth

These are not the only effects that Adam and Eve's transgression have on the Earth. It has already been established that because of the personifications used by Milton, his vitalist depiction of Earth is that of a sentient and responsive being. Not only does Earth feel physical pain upon Adam and Eve's tasting of the forbidden fruit, but most of the consequences are also mainly hers to bear. A part of the tragedy of the Fall is that although the Earth is blameless, it arguably faces the direst consequences in the future because of a human error. The Earth's axis is tilted, and astronomical bodies are repositioned, which creates different seasons and extreme temperatures:

> The Sun
> Had first his precept so to move, so shine,
> As might affect the Earth with cold and heat
> Scarce tollerable, and from the North to call
> Decrepit Winter, from the South to bring
> Solstitial summers heat [...]
> Some say he bid his angels turne ascanse
> The Poles of Earth twice ten degrees and more
> From the Suns Axle; they with labour push'd
> Oblique the Centric Globe (X.651-71)

This passage makes it clear that the Earth is significantly affected by humanity's sin. Whereas the Earth first enjoyed a pleasant climate and a harmonious existence with its natural inhabitants, now, because of these changes, Earth will be subjected to suffering. DuRocher points out that "the injury to the Earth is neither whimsical nor a case of human emotion projected upon physical nature" and that "Milton is not indulging in the poetic expedient of

ascribing human emotions to natural forces, […] the pathetic fallacy" (101). Indeed, Earth's suffering is felt, because of her being a sentient being, and her own character in the narrative. Adam and Eve were given the responsibility of life on Earth, and by the consumption of the forbidden fruit "Adam and Eve […] have become consumers of the sacred reminder of their responsibility to all creation" (McColley 172).

About these changes made to Creation, Marcus notes two contradictory interpretations. She argues that this passage may be read as God making these cosmic changes: "the destruction of nature is rather God's punishment for [the act of plucking the apple] and is engineered by God himself and his angels" (98). After all, the narrative clearly states: "Some say he bid his angels turne ascanse" (X.668). However, this is where, according to Marcus, the narrative leaves room for interpretation. The repeated changes God allegedly ordered the angels to make are repeatedly hedged by the words 'some say'. Within the wider vitalist context of the entire epic, Marcus notes that "Milton hints at another explanation for the fall of nature, one in which the natural world is not thrown out of kilter by the mechanical intervention of angels but deviates of its own accord" (98). The Earth, the Sun, and likewise the planets and stars have been personified at earlier points in the narrative. Because of this it seems plausible that here these same sentient beings would again act of their own volition, as an expression of their horror.

This vitalist sentience is confirmed when the Sun also responds to the moment of transgressing: "At that tasted Fruit / The Sun, as from Thyestean Banquet, turn'd / His course intended" (X.687-9). The Sun is personified, and as an onlooker the Sun responds in horror to the original sin. This might confirm the second interpretation offered by Marcus. Furthermore, Swaim observes that the use of this simile conveys "reversal, revulsion, betrayal" and that thus "[t]he fall signifies the shift from unity to division and from direction to indirection" (82). In correspondence to Swaim, Marcus observes that "[t]his […] attributes sympathy,

antipathy, and independent agency to the sun and also a capacity for moral judgment: he perceives Adam and Eve's eating the fruit as a form of unintended cannibalism" (98).

The connection between humanity and Earth will remain; after all humanity still needs nature in order to survive. The mutual dependency seems to have disappeared, nature appears to have turned away from Adam and Eve. However, the manner in which they survive has changed enormously, for humanity will now use nature, with all its flora and fauna, for their fallen and selfish purposes.

3.3 Adam and Eve's place

After the effects on the natural world of their actions have been made clear to them, Adam and Eve receive their punishment, namely that they must leave the garden of Eden. While both of them lament their fate, Adam and Eve react quite differently to the news brought to them by the archangel Michael. Eve's reaction is highly emotional:

> O unexpected stroke, worse then of Death!
> Must I thus leave thee Paradise? thus leave
> Thee Native Soile, these happie Walks and Shades,
> Fit haunt of Gods? where I had hope to spend,
> Quiet though sad, the respit of that day
> That must be mortal to us both. (XI.268-73)

This outburst by Eve implies that before this moment, she had not understood the gravity of her transgression. In her speech she shows understanding of the fact that she and Adam are now mortal, however the notion that she might have to leave the garden of Eden has never crossed her mind. Moreover, Eve directly addresses the garden of Eden. This implies that she is aware of its consciousness and the reciprocal relationship they once had. To account for Eve's emotional reaction, Hiltner discusses 'bioregionalism', which is the "idea that human beings are connected to a particular place on the Earth" (14). Hiltner further quotes Bill

Devall who writes that "[t]he more we know a specific place intimately – know its moods, seasons, changes, aspects, native creatures – the more we know our ecological selves" (14). Adam, and especially Eve, are rooted in Paradise in such a way that leaving the garden of Eden would mean leaving a part of themselves. After her initial lament, Eve addresses flowers:

> O flours,
> That never will in other Climate grow,
> My early visitation, and my last
> At Eev'n, which I bred up with tender hand
> From the first op'ning bud, and gave ye Names,
> Who now shall reare ye to the Sun, or ranke
> Your Tribes, and water from th' ambrosial Fount? (273-9)

Part of this passage reminisces a mother's pain at having to abandon her children. The maternal instincts she has shown towards the plants and flowers in the garden throughout the narrative, are tragically re-established in this moment by her stating that she 'bred them up with tender hand' and gave them their names. Hiltner cites Arne Naess, who expounds on an 'internal relation' with place, of which Naess provides the example of "[m]y relation to this place is such that if the place is changed, I am changed" (12). Hiltner clarifies this by explaining that "when we are in an internal relation we do not objectify that which is in the relation with us, so rivers, mountains, plants, and animals are not apart from us as some-*thing* […], but rather, as existing in the same place as we do, part of our-selves" (12). In response to the idea of the internal relation, Hiltner notes that human beings "can "fall" out of these internal relations to understand ourselves as viewing subjects who perceive objects – an external relation" (12). In the context of *Paradise Lost,* Adam, and especially Eve, have an internal relation with the garden of Eden. Since Adam and Eve have forsaken their right to dwell in Paradise, they must leave, and Adam aptly points out: "all places else / Inhospitable

appeer and desolate, / Nor knowing us nor known" (XI.305-7). Adam thus still recognises the connection they once enjoyed with Earth, and recognises it as a sentient being capable of 'knowing'. Of this passage, Hiltner notes that "[t]his reciprocal relation of knowledge, to say nothing of the fact that the place is understood as knower of its inhabitants, makes clear what Adam and Eve have lost with Paradise: that a horrific change in their relation to the place has occurred. […] [t]hey no longer enjoy […] an "internal relation" with the place" (20). Eve more obviously laments the fact that they have to leave Eden specifically, a place she feels very strongly about, a place with which she has an internal relation. Indeed, Marcus calls Eve the Garden's "resident protector and ordering principle" (100). It can be said that Eve feels as though the garden of Eden is something that she has created, which accounts for her maternal feelings. Not only is she sad about having to abandon it, but she is also worried about what may come of the garden itself. She does not seem to realise that Eden will remain pure, and it is her and Adam who have become impure.

Moreover, when God orders that the humans must be ejected from the garden of Eden, the text suggests that it is nature itself that ejects them: "Eject him tainted now, and purge him off / As a distemper, gross to aire as gross" (XI.52-3). After all, pure and impure cannot coexist. In contrast to Eve, Adam does not seem sad about leaving the garden because of his connection to the garden itself. Rather, he laments having to leave the garden because to him it seemed that this was his connection to God: "This most afflicts me, that departing hence, / As from his face I shall be hid, deprivd / His blessed count'nance; here I could frequent, / With worship, place by place where he voutsaf'd / Presence Divine" (XI.315-19). Adam seemingly feels that his ejection from the garden of Eden is akin to being abandoned by God.

3.4 Restoring Eden

Milton seemingly places the blame for the disruption of natural perfection and environmental decay on foolish, harmful human intervention. Marcus notes that within a vitalist context,

Adam and Eve directly bring about the fall of nature. Hiltner even states that because of Earth's immediate and involuntary reaction upon Eve's transgression, the narrative agrees with environmentalists who hold that humanity's foolishness has caused ecological devastation to Earth: "Milton goes further in suggesting that this foolish uprooting of ourselves from our place on Earth was the pivotal human act – and the source of our current sorrow" (Hiltner 5). Hiltner goes even further by claiming that every human violation of the earth can be classified as a repetition of the Fall, implying that Earth's 'wound' is ever-present. The only way to renew this connection to Earth "is to allow ourselves to feel this shared wound at once for ourselves *and* for the Earth" (Hiltner 5). Marcus counters Hiltner's argument, stating that "[i]n this interpretation […] there is no such thing as a *felix culpa*" (101), and she furthermore criticises Hiltner's deemphasising of "Milton's internalization of the idea of Eden" (101). Indeed, through the archangel Michael, Milton does emphasise the belief that Paradise may one day be internalised.

This happens upon Adam and Eve's ejection from Paradise, Adam needs reassurance from Michael that leaving the Garden does not equal losing his religion. Adam needs to be told that he will now have to experience his faith as "abstract and transcendent" (Van Rooden 191) and find Paradise within himself. In Michael's words:

> Onely add
> Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith,
> Add vertue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,
> By name to come call'd Charitie, the soul
> Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
> To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
> A Paradise within thee, happier farr (XII.581-7)

Marcus criticises Hiltner's emphasis on the concept of loss, as he argues the connection may only be repaired by "renewing our attachment to place" (Marcus 101). Instead, she states that "[f]or Milton […] the Fall is reparable and does not require humans to re-experience the original wounding of earth" (101). This, Marcus argues, becomes clear when put in the larger context of the mid-century movement of vitalism. A movement which indeed was rooted in science as well as poetry. Furthermore, Milton himself writes the following in *Of Education*, which is in line with what Michael teaches Adam, namely that the results of the fall can partly be undone:

> The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which, being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection (219)

The seventeenth-century movement seeking to restore Eden was thus rightly based on an attempt to attain "scientific and craft-based expertise and an Adam-like knowledge of the natural world" (Marcus 101-2). Milton seemingly presents an opportunity for future generations to learn through experience, and to "add Faith, / Add vertue, Patience, Temperance, add Love" (XII. 581-2). He thus proposes the need for a vitalist process "of physical and moral purification" (Marcus 104). If humanity reaches awareness and internalisation, they will be able to restore their connection to Earth. By doing so, they will restore Eden within themselves, but perhaps more importantly; "the Earth / Shall all be Paradise, far happier place / Then this of Eden, and far happier daies" (XII.463-5). Indeed, Marcus notes that "[a]s humans gradually regain their capacity for benevolence and cherishing of the beings around them, they enable the regeneration of earth and the natural world" (104). As such, a 'Paradise within' would inevitably lead to a paradise in the world outside (Marcus 104).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has established numerous changes to the relationship between humanity and their natural environment after the Fall. The postlapsarian narrative offers two rather contradictory interpretations; one being that God turned nature from humanity, the other being that nature itself turned from humanity. Within its vitalist context, the latter interpretation seems plausible. Because of the numerous personifications throughout the narrative which establish the natural environment as sentient beings, it seems likely that Earth changes out of an involuntary horrified response rather than through divine or angelic intervention. After all, it is ultimately the Garden itself who 'ejects' Adam and Eve: "Eject him tainted now" (XI.52).

The changes to the natural world cause a significant change in the relationship between humanity and their natural environment. Whereas before the Fall, Adam and Eve exhibited a custodial and benevolent role towards nature, they now turn to it for fallen purposes. Moreover, where the relationship between the two human characters and their environment was initially based on mutual dependency and reciprocity, it has now turned one-sided. Adam and Eve need nature in order to survive, but nature having turned away from humanity does not seem to need them in return.

Upon their ejection, Adam and Eve both lament their loss of connectedness to their environment and in turn their connection to God. Michael reassures them by restoring hope for future generations: Paradise may be regained. Within its vitalist context, Marcus notes that "[i]f natural things have volition and react sympathetically to other beings in their immediate neighbourhood, then through the reintroduction of a good and benevolent force like Christ or a regenerated Adam, the world can gradually right itself through the same waves of empathy that caused it to degenerate from its first perfection" (104). A restoration of Eden can thus be found in an internalisation of Eden.

CONCLUSION

Milton's *Paradise Lost* is an impressive retelling of perhaps one of the best-known religious stories. At the same time, it is a work of literature deeply rooted in its seventeenth-century cultural-historical contexts. To fully appreciate the depth of the work, some knowledge of these contexts is necessary. Indeed, while Milton was highly vocal about his personal views on various controversial matters in his prose works, *Paradise Lost* likewise addresses many of these same issues. This thesis has read *Paradise Lost* in interaction with its cultural-historical context relating to ecology, environmentalism and vitalism. It thus considered the relationship between humanity and the rest of nature as it was portrayed in *Paradise Lost* as well as during Milton's seventeenth century.

The first chapter established the countless ecological changes that occurred in Britain during the seventeenth century. During this era, nature was increasingly utilised for primarily economic and scientific purposes. Several scholars have related this trend to common early modern interpretations of Genesis, which seemingly justified humanity's dominion over nature. Nevertheless, there was also considerable debate about this degradation of Britain's nature, and several writers openly argued about this issue. Moreover, Leah S. Marcus notes a mid-seventeenth-century movement of vitalism; in science, but also in poetry. This movement sought to restore Eden and undo Adam and Eve's transgression. Environmental concerns were particularly voiced in pastoral poetry which also often contained Biblical allusions to Paradise. Many pastoral poets used a vitalist mode in their work, as was exemplified in the first chapter by Andrew Marvell's poem *The Garden*. In *Paradise Lost,* Milton combines the two themes discussed in the first chapter; namely the Biblical narrative of Creation and the Fall, and a view on humanity's relationship to their environment.

My second chapter has analysed the prelapsarian relation between humanity and its natural environment in *Paradise Lost*. The prelapsarian narrative establishes an inherently

reciprocal and custodial relationship between Adam and Eve and the rest of nature. As such, Milton seems to suggest that the ideal relationship between humanity and the rest of nature is this benevolent and custodial approach. Milton suggests this throughout the prelapsarian narrative by employing vitalist characteristics in his portrayal of the garden of Eden. Milton takes a pastoral approach in his first descriptions of the garden itself, and thus evokes a great sense of nostalgia in his readers. Moreover, he presents all life in Eden as sentient: "the Earth / Gave sign of gratulation, and each Hill; / Joyous the Birds; fresh Gales and gentle Aires / Whisper'd it to te Woods" (VIII.513-6). By personifying plants, flowers and celestial bodies, he endows with agency, morality and, most importantly, free will. By doing so, Milton presents them all as characters in their own right. The narrative thus places great emphasis on the reciprocity and mutual dependency of the relationship between the two humans and the rest of nature and focuses on human responsibility for the natural environment. In the context of the poem, and the vitalist movement, Eden may thus symbolise human benevolence and custody of the natural environment. The need for Eden's restoration may then therefore be rooted in these seventeenth-century environmental changes as described in the first chapter.

The third chapter has considered the postlapsarian narrative of *Paradise Lost* and the numerous changes that occur to the relationship between humanity and their natural environment. Marcus notes that these changes are subject to two contradictory interpretations, namely that God turned nature from humanity, or that nature itself turned from humanity. In the prelapsarian narrative, Milton already establishes many aspects of the natural environment as sentient through his frequent use of personification. Therefore, the latter interpretation seems plausible. After all, after Eve's transgression Earth responds in pain, something which is repeated the moment Adam transgresses: "Earth trembl'd from her entrails, as again / In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan, / Skie lowr'd, and muttering Thunder, som sad drops / Wept at completing of the mortal Sin / Original" (IX.1000-4). At the same moment, the Sun

turns away in horror: “The Sun, as from Thyestean Banquet, turn’d / His course intended” (X.688). This implies such a strong moral sentience on the part of nature itself that it is very likely that it is nature which turns against humanity, rather than needing God’s bidding to do so. Ultimately, it is the Garden itself which ejects Adam and Eve in response to their harmful human intervention in nature.

After the fall, the changes between the prelapsarian and postlapsarian narrative are fully noticeable. Before the fall, Adam and Eve adopt a custodial and benevolent role towards nature, and they enjoy a relationship based on mutual dependency and reciprocity. This relationship seems irrevocably altered after the Fall, because Nature has turned away from them. Adam and Eve still depend on their environment for survival, but their environment does no longer need them in return. The one-sidedness of their relationship is made clear in several instances: “Thorns also and Thistles it shall bring thee forth” (X.203) and animals “with count’nance grim / Glar’d on him passing” (X.713-4).

Upon their ejection from Eden, both Adam and Eve lament the loss of their relationship to their environment and express anxieties about their future outside Eden: “all places else / Inhospitable appeer and desolate, / Nor knowing us nor known” (XI.305-7). Adam recognises Earth as a being with a capacity for ‘knowing’. Eve does the same, when she directly addresses the garden of Eden: “Must I thus leave thee Paradise?” (XI.269). This indicates that both characters are aware of the relationship they once had with their environment, and are also aware of what they have lost, and what this might mean for the future. Michael reassures them, by stating that Paradise may be regained by internalisation: “A Paradise within thee, happier farr” (XII.587).

This is thoroughly in line with the seventeenth-century vitalist movement, which seeks to restore Eden through awareness, internalisation and an “Adam-like knowledge of the natural world” (Marcus 102). In the context of the seventeenth century, restoring Eden might

imply restoring humanity's benevolent and custodial role towards their environment. This notion seems far away considering the ecological changes caused by human intervention during that era, but not unrealistic considering the seventeenth-century debates on the matter. *Paradise Lost* within its vitalist context seems to attempt to raise awareness for a mutual respect, and virtuous life, as then "the Earth / Shall all be Paradise, far happier place / Then this of Eden" (XII.463-5). Nevertheless, *Paradise Lost* does imply that only the Second Coming of Christ can bring about this full restoration. The narrative urges mankind to attempt to restore their connection to their environment through moral and rational advancement, implying that after mankind does so, Christ will not only bring salvation to humanity, but all of Creation. Christ will ascend, and then "reward / His faithful, and receave them into bliss, / Whether in Heav'n or Earth" (XII.461-3).

Today, the world faces even more significant environmental issues than in the seventeenth century. Arguably, twenty-first century western society is less religious than that of the seventeenth century, and *Paradise Lost* is likewise inherently rooted in its time. However, the main sentiments portrayed in *Paradise Lost* are likely to correspond to the ideas of a twenty-first century environmentalist. Indeed, Marcus notes that "if we read Milton in the full seventeenth-century context of his vitalism, we can discover a writer who does not merely describe the human race's wrenching alienation from earth, but also proposes a trajectory for reclamation that is quite compatible with modern efforts to decrease pollution though it operates by radically different and (to us) impossibly utopian means" (104). Of course, Milton's proposition for the internalisation of Eden is not sufficient for solving the ecological problems this century faces, and arguably human intervention is necessary to stop the effects of all preceding harmful human intervention. Nevertheless, the virtues which the epic seems to advocate in its representation of humanity's relationship with its natural environment are worth rekindling.

Because this subject still contains so much modern-day relevance, reading *Paradise Lost* within this ecological framework opens up many opportunities for secondary-school teachers such as myself to practically implement it in a literary curriculum. Particularly the younger generation is occupied with environmentalism, seeking sustainable solutions for the future. As stated earlier in this thesis, ecological concern is often considered to be a modern one. Furthermore, the term environmentalism was even not coined until the twentieth century. By having children discover that these same types of concerns and a similar kind of activism were already present centuries ago, teachers can bring cultural history, history and literature into the English curriculum and show their relevance in a modern-day context. Moreover, in this respect *Paradise Lost* is a highly suitable text, because the story of Adam and Eve is undoubtedly recognisable to most. Reading *Paradise Lost* in its entirety might be slightly too ambitious for secondary school pupils, but by singling out passages that focus on the relationship between Adam and Eve and their natural environment and by offering relevant cultural-historical contexts, also relating to vitalism, *Paradise Lost* might serve as an engaging starting point for literary reflection and critical thought among secondary school pupils.

Reading *Paradise Lost* from an ecological perspective shows that it presents a clear ideal relationship between humanity and the rest of nature, which is portrayed as sentient and capable of moral cognition. Given the detrimental consequences that take place after the Fall, the narrative emphasises for need of this relationship to be restored. *Paradise Lost* was published in the midst of a debate regarding ecological change, and the work resonates with the ideas of the seventeenth-century wave of vitalism which actively sought to restore Eden through internalisation, meaning through humanity's moral and rational advancement. This a notion is reiterated in *Paradise Lost*. Since environmentalism is a topic with clear relevance for present-day secondary school pupils, it is worthwhile examining *Paradise Lost* from this

perspective in the secondary school classroom. *Paradise Lost*, while deeply rooted in its time, also resonates with twenty-first century ecological concerns.

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