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Falling Forward: Continuity and Change in the Poetics of Eden

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Falling Forward: Continuity and Change in the Poetics of Eden

by

Julie L Gafney

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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FALLING FORWARD: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE POETICS OF EDEN

by

Julie L. Gafney

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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This dissertation suggests that late fourteenth century vernacular poetry in Middle English takes up the idea of a secular Eden by which various non-normative theorizations of time and self are made possible. The invocation of a rich and multifarious Eden may be effectively understood through its relationship to the psychoanalytic theorization of origins by which Eden's powerful potentiality for therapeutic or at least revelatory growth is inherent in its availability for processes of cyclical return. The present study will attempt to redress the tendency to treat Eden only as a fall and thereby gain a better understanding of the modes of expression and the questions of subjectivity and longing that Eden might also bring forward. I will necessarily treat the fall not exactly as a “thing indifferent,” but as one part of a dialectical discussion that is at least as invested in continuity as it is in rupture.
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Introduction

Towards the conclusion of Elena Ferrante’s celebrated Neapolitan series the narrator, also Elena, recounts the curious exchanges that her enigmatic and fiery friend Lila shares with Elena’s daughter Imma. In an effort perhaps to quell Imma’s fears that her father may have engaged in corrupt political practices, perhaps to ease Lila’s suffering at the disappearance of her own daughter, Tina, Lila tells Imma stories of Naples that emphasize the city’s cyclical progression of destruction and rehabilitation, “where everything was marvelous and everything became grey and irrational and everything sparkled again, as when a cloud passes over the sun and the sun appears to flee, a timid, pale disk, near extinction, but now look, once the cloud dissolves it’s suddenly dazzling again, so bright you have to shield your eyes with your hand.”¹ Elena’s own conception of time and of morality depend on a sturdy chronological telos, and she is wary but captivated by Lila’s penetrating formulations.

Lila is, in fact, using a specific Neapolitan locale to piece through her theorization of a cyclical city that promises constant change. She describes the neighborhood of Vasto, which at the moment of narration is run-down and decrepit, but which contains the Piazza de Martiri where many of the lengthy chronicle’s emotional climaxes take place. According to Lila, the area was cleaned up in the 19th century as part of a rebuilding project, but before that it has been filthy and dangerous, and at that time had been given its current name. But, even before that, Imma recounts to her mother:

Before the Vasto was called Vasto and was in essence wasteland—Aunt Lina recounted—there had been villas, gardens, fountains. In that very place the Marchese di Vico had built a palace, with a garden, called Paradise. The garden of Paradise was full of hidden water games, Mamma. The most famous was a big white mulberry tree, which had a system of almost invisible channels: water flowed

through them, falling like rain from the branches or coursing like a waterfall down the trunk. Understand? From the Paradise of the Marchese di Vico to the Vasto of the Marchese del Vasto, to the Cleanup of the Mayor Nicola Amore, to the Vasto again, to further renaissances and so on at that rate.²

The neighborhood began as a garden or, more specifically, a paradise. Lila’s narrative is telling; the pleasing space around this early palace is not countryside or even a utopia or a heaven. It is, specifically, a “garden of Paradise,” complete with central tree and flowing water.

It is not at all surprising or anomalous that the paradise garden should appear just at the moment in the quartet of novels when Lila and the other characters begin explicitly to theorize and develop cyclical notions of time and identity. The garden here serves as an example of an Italian space that is repurposed and reinvented not at whim and not via an endless march toward a superior state of being, but rather as a space which can be reinvented, purified, and newly restored to former beauty. But it serves for the imagined generality that has lived and now lives in the Vasto, as well as specifically for Imma, Lila, and Elena, as a backdrop for the human stories that rely upon continuity as much as on change. Indeed, here, change and continuity symbiotically reinforce one another; because there is no expulsion from the paradise garden, but rather a layering of various historical, social, and personal experiences upon that one location, because of the very geographic continuity the Vasto permits, the changes and cycles that the neighborhood undergoes and allows are all the more visible. The Vasto’s continuity of cyclical change informs the internal psychological development of those characters who come into contact with it. Elena revisits Lila’s childhood and appropriates it in order to succeed as an intellectual, as well as to experience and discard her own formative passion with Nino. Lila can return

painfully to the days when her daughter was alive, to her old neighborhood, and indeed her parents’ old home, not out of a pathetic yearning to relive the past, but in order that she might inhabit her past in order to understand it better. And Imma, the daughter who is not lost, leaves Italy permanently, but returns regularly, as to a museum of her own life.

There is much to be made of the relationship between the paradise garden and a fusion of continuity and change that emphasize a cyclical understanding of both time and personal identity. Ferrante’s series frenetically engages with a variety of Marxist ideologies that permeate the Italian consciousness in the decades following the second World War. We might read this paradise garden, centrally located in a bustling city whose day-to-day machinations emphasize the destructive power of bourgeois norms and the painful exploitation of those who cannot, or will not, adhere to them, as the stage constructed by just those norms and on which the socio-political life of a city and a country beyond are performed. We might additionally understand the garden to resonate with the Italian countryside beyond the city, a peaceful and pastoral dream-space that Lila and Elena can never quite achieve. As children, they ran away from school to visit this countryside and the sea beyond it, but never arrived; as adults, they are inexorably drawn back and forth between the economically and socially privileged suburbs, with their fresh air and flowered yards, and the the crowded inner city where they grew up.

The socio-economic framing of the garden and its placement within Elena and Lila’s psychological lives function as a part of the garden’s Edenic resonances. In a set of novels rife with Catholic symbols and practices or rituals, this garden must immediately remind the reader of Eden. Any paradise on earth might evoke the Eden garden, but this one, in particular, with its watery conduits and its arboreal centerpiece, does so even more
explicitly. Even its association with a palace and the richness and royalty that therefore transmit themselves to the surrounding areas emphasizes the primacy of this originary space and therefore intensify its Edenic quality.

And yet, the Ferrante novels are themselves atheistic works in the word's truest sense. For Ferrante, religion in general, and particularly Catholicism, function within the Italian urban life of the 20th century as what Agamben would term “tradition.” Agamben employs the term *Nachleben* in order to describe the purpose and import of tradition; *Nachleben* refers to an enriched kind of life, a thriving that relies not on the promise of the afterlife (*nach*), but on the premise of continued life on earth.3 Such is precisely Ferrante's use of Catholic traditions such as the baptism of a child or the uncomfortable Christmas dinners Lila's family prepares for her wealthy and upwardly mobile husband. At no point does theology drive the characters in their motivations, nor does it drive the narrative itself. Instead, religion augments the protagonists' powerful grip on a continued life on earth, however painful it might prove to be. The ambitions both of the characters and of the narrative are earth-bound; ambition, power, and psychology prompt the actions of each.

Why, then, does it matter that this garden, with its manifold resonances, be understood as a quasi-Eden? It is the very Eden-ness of the garden which allows it to function as an emblem *not* of divine grace, but rather of Agamben's *Nachleben*. Ferrante inherits and builds upon a long lineage of Edens, a piece of which I shall interrogate and attempt to bring to light in the work that follows. These narrative Edens appear in secular literature in order to promote the ends and means of human creatures as divorced from the ends and means of a deity. For them, Eden serves as a kind of secular creation story, an

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origin through which the construction of norms, be they gendered, social, economic, bodily, or psychological, may be revisited and reframed or rewritten by the poets and prose-writers who visit it.

Ferrante’s cyclical paradise garden that functions as a rewriting or reimaging of an Edenic space developed in the flowering of vernacular poetics of the late 14th century. Post-plague social, hierarchical, and political upheaval in Britain allowed for and encouraged an experimentalism in literary pursuits that simultaneously reflected and shaped non-normative expressions of identity. The Edenic space that is regularly invoked in late 14th century vernacular poetics allows, as in Ferrante, for a constant revisiting of an origin space, in which the rules of identity construction may be reimagined or, rather, in which an identity might be imagined as formed before certain normative strictures had developed.

Naturally, many 14th century works subscribe to a reverse-teleological model of historical time. In Gower’s Nebuchadnezzar episode of the Confessio Amantis prologue, for instance, the unfortunate king’s dream sequence is introduced as an example of man’s culpability writ large on the natural world. Man has passed through the Golden Age of united monarchy, through the Silver age of the Greek heroes, the Bronze age of the Romans, the Brass age of Charlemagne. Gower leaves contemporary man standing on feet of Earth and Steel. According to this model the world of men and the natural world on which human dramas are performed exist in a state of perpetual decline ever since the first sinful act: “For ferst unto the mannes heste/ Was every creature ordeined,/ Bot afterward it was

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restreigned:/ Whan that he fell, thei fallen eke,/ Whan he wax sek, thei waxen seke” (910-914). The “sickness” that currently afflicts the world even attacks the seemingly innocent plan and animal life: “Of every thing in his degree,/ Benethe forth among ous hierer/ Al stant aliche in this matiere:/ The See now ebbeth, now it floweth,/ The lond now welketh, now it growth,/ Now be the Trees with leves grene,/ Now thei be bare and nothing sene…” (930-936). Once, this narrative goes, the lives of men were stable; monarchs were honorable; heroes brave; and the social order comprehensible. Now, however, the world has degenerated into a constant and discomfiting state of flux as evidenced by the very tides and the changing seasons; once perennially green, leaves now endure a bleak period of barren and dusty decay.

And yet, despite the ominous link between a primary act of sinfulness and the changeable tides and seasons, this passage does not consign the human race and its earthly home to pure decline. Rather, the state in which Gower’s men of earth and steel find themselves is one shaped by change or transition. That is, though the leaves do indeed die and fall off their trees each autumn, they renew and return each spring, bringing with them a fresh verdure. If Gower codes the barren winterscape as emblematic of the sickness of a fallen world and the green springtime pastures as representative of an unfallen Edenic paradise, then the very changeable nature of the seasons ensures that that paradisal origin be reestablished each spring. It can literally be re inhabited each April or May as humans and animals alike enjoy the warming sunshine and the seasonal responses of the plant life.

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6 Ibid
Gower therefore inscribes the potential for cyclical renewal even into his commentary on the world’s degeneracy.

Gower’s hypothesis of cyclical renewal takes an even more radical expression in his retelling of Genesis 3. He describes the expulsion Adam and Eve suffer from the Garden:

Virgines comen bothe tuo  
Into the world and were ashamed,  
Til that nature hem hath reclaimed  
To love, and tauxt hem thilke lore,  
That ferst thei keste, and overmore  
Thei don that is to kinde due,  
Wherof thei hadden fair issue (8.52-58).7

Gower takes the theological position that Adam and Eve did not engage in sexual intercourse during their brief stay in the Eden garden, but came into the world as two virgins. For Gower, the expulsion is practically a birth scene; he diverges from the Genesis text in having his first humans discover their nakedness upon expulsion from the garden, rather than upon their moment of transgression, thereby intensifying the constitutive effect of the expulsion on the humans. Adam and Eve emerge like two infants, naked, confused, and ashamed. Nature, a loving and supportive parent, receives the two human children and comforts them, claiming them as her own and educating them in the progression of loving acts that would eventually lead to reproductive sex.

We must not overlook nature’s exact act, however. She does not welcome, accept, or purchase the infantile humans, but rather reclaims them: “til that nature hem hath reclaimed.” Therefore, though Gower does not detail for us the life that the first humans led before their expulsion, we must understand it to be one in which nature claimed them and held sway over them. Since nature’s primary aim in this passage is the propagation of the

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species, we should then understand that when nature ruled the first humans in Eden, she taught them some degree of the loving sexuality that she now instructs them in after their expulsion. It is as though the fall and the expulsion induced a temporary amnesia on the first humans who, like physical therapy patients, must re-learn the arts of love that they had initially known.

Gower’s fall, therefore, is real and has consequences. But, its effects are not immutable. Humans can relearn or reclaim the paradisal lifestyle that they enjoyed before the fall. Specifically, and significantly, the constitutive element of that lifestyle here is romantic and sexual action and emotion. Through practice, guided by nature, Adam and Eve can come to enjoy the same kind of sex they would have enjoyed in Eden, and can also presumably enjoy the same kind of emotional or affective connection.

A cyclical Eden therefore requires that we reform one crucial piece of the theological tradition that has shaped the understanding of Edenic origins especially since the patristic interpretations of Eden became prevalent and near universal over the late antique and early medieval periods in Europe, North Africa, and parts of the Middle East. This is the now ubiquitous association of the garden with its fall. One need only ask a roomful of undergraduates about Eden to be reminded that its placement in a contemporary consciousness is as a paradise always and already lost: a stage for original sin.

As Voltaire famously put it, Augustine of Hippo constructed the association between a primeval paradise and its foregone and precipitous overthrow: "We admit that St. Augustine was the first who brought this strange notion into credit; a notion worthy of the warm and romantic brain of an African debauchee and penitent, Manichean and Christian,
tolerant and persecuting—who passed his life in perpetual self-contradiction."*8 Voltaire's assertion, though reductive and poetic, is essentially upheld by current investigations of the phenomenon of original sin and its permanence in the Christian tradition. Indeed, Augustine has most recently been termed “The Father of Original Sin” by James Boyce in his 2015 *Born Bad: Original Sin and the Making of the Western World.*9 Elain Pagels, Peter Brown, Steven Justice, Robin Lane Fox, William B Parsons, and others take up nuanced investigations of the social, cultural, political, and personal factors that propelled Augustine toward his extremism, as well as those forces that made Augustine’s theology universal, rather than marginal, in the development of Christianity.10 Augustine’s writings and specifically his interpretations of Genesis equate the retelling of the garden story with the doctrine of original sin.

Let us briefly examine the narrative basis for original sin. We must acknowledge an explicit rupture in the Hebrew text of Genesis 3. Built, either of earth or of bone and placed within the Garden, Adam and Eve suffer deception at the hands of the serpent and are cast out of the Garden of Eden, which is then guarded by an angel and a flaming sword. Along with this expulsion, God articulates a number of changes to transpire in the lives of Adam

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and Eve. Eve and her offspring will now experience enmity for the serpent; Eve will endure labor pains when she gives birth, and she will be ruled by her husband. Adam will famously earn his daily bread through labor, and he and his offspring (as well as his wife) will return to the ground when their lives have run their courses. Certainly, then, the story involves some kind of shift, both geographically and phenomenologically.

The doctrine of original sin is the offspring of one interpretive reading of Genesis. Indeed, Augustine trained in rhetoric despite his conflicted relationship with the transformative power of oratory, his gargantuan corpus is filled with meditations and interpretations of Scripture, and the applications those readings should have on the everyday Christian experience. Augustine’s work, through a progression historians and theologians alike track carefully, becomes seminal to the Christian tradition and imbues a collective secular consciousness even now. The 21st century American is called upon to answer for a multiplicity of “original sins” including slavery, the American Indian genocides, a reliance on exploitative labor, and the environmental carelessness that has precipitated global warming. In its simplest iteration, the doctrine of original sin understands the story of Adam and Eve not simply as a tale of wrongdoing, but as the first wrongdoing and one which due to its severity becomes part of the human creature’s spiritual, rational, and physical makeup from that moment on. According to this interpretation, the shift or rupture we articulate above is coded as unequivocally bad; humans undergo a demotion from a state of innocence to a state of guilt that is visited upon their children even as they are born. Moreover, the tangible changes they undergo are understood as punishments that recall the irrevocable losses and replay the horrid crimes
of these now-damaged people. Every subsequent crime echoes that first crime, and every indication of human degeneracy may be explained by referencing this doctrine.

While Augustine was perhaps the most emphatic and prolific proponent of original sin, and interpreted Genesis over and over in his voluminous corpus, his articulations took hold and gained momentum in the early Christian Church largely due to the political and social landscape of the day. Augustine builds on the Pauline and Gnostic traditions, but gives voice to the pressing need among early Christians to champion their own autonomy; the Genesis story, then, the doctrine of original sin, and its resulting guilt, allowed early Christians the ability to imagine themselves as enabled to make their own political choices, despite disastrous consequences. Original sin, then, was a perpetual reminder of this freedom, but it was also a tactic to enable the social control of a nascent Christian state: “God allowed us to sin in order to prove to us from our own experience that ‘our true good is free slavery’—slavery to God in the first place and, in the second, to his agent, the emperor.”¹¹ Paradoxically, it is the true belief in personal freedom that would enable early Christians to choose obedience, both to their God and also to their government.

Peter Brown, Carolyn Walker Bynum, and many others have linked the prevalence of the theory of original sin with early Christian practices of bodily and sexual renunciation. Though the vast body of work on this topic demonstrates its complex and multifaceted nature, one central tenet of these investigations seems to be a recreation of the relationship between a human creature’s spiritual, mental, or rational capacities and his physical and material capacities. The creature therefore enacts the same kinds of controls and endues the same kind of disobediences that the Christian subject experiences with respect to God,

or that the Roman subject experiences with respect to the emperor. When the body obeys commands, even difficult commands like continence or chastity, it performs the role of obedient subject. When the body disobeys, it reenacts the drama of the fall, stokes the subject’s guilt, and reinforces the necessity of stricter adherence in future to spiritual, political, and social norms.

The rhetoric of original sin permeates literary and theological expression of the Christian consciousness for the next centuries and, as I have indicated, even in today's largely secular consciousness. Much Christian orthodoxy depends upon man’s innate and unassailable sinfulness which can only be remedied by the sacrifice of Jesus; that sacrifice is proportionally weighty depending upon the gravity of the situation it reverses. Moreover, the political argument that Pagels articulates in her works employs a dependence on original sin to enhance and protect a newfound Christian hegemony, functions well even into the high Middle Ages; the guilt of original sin symbiotically reinforces the human conception of his own autonomy and also the necessity for his obedience to the church, to the king, and to the various and often hidden social, cultural, economic, and physical norms that shape the world about him. Augustinian articulations of original sinfulness become orthodox and are repeated as truth by scholastics like Thomas Aquinas, as well as by church and political leaders. Indeed, Chaucer's Parson gives a literary representation of one simple clergyman who does not exploit his flock or enjoy an exalted social position, but who with his Plowman brother serves the needs of his rural community. This preacher’s lengthy sermon, the final tale in the authoritative Ellesmere manuscript, is
rife with Augustinian theology and with direct quotations from many of his sermons. Though critics speculate on Parson’s Lollard leanings, much of his treatise on the seven deadly sins reads like a primer in theological orthodoxy of the day. Indeed, the Parson’s description of the “spryngynge of synnes” reads like a straightforward explanation of the doctrine of original sin. The Parson locates this narrative as a part of his commentary on confession, a necessary component of penitence. He begins:

Of the spryngynge of synnes seith Seint Paul in this wise: that “Right as by a man synne entred first into this world, and through that synne deeth, right so thilke deeth entred into alle men that synnedden.” And this man was Adam, by whom synne entred into this world, whan he brak the comauendementz of God. And therefore, he that first was so mighty that he sholde nat have dyed, bicam swich oon that he moste nedes dye, wether he wolde or noon and al his progenye in this world, that in thilke man synnedden. Looke that in th’estaat of innocence, whan Adam and Eve naked weren in Paradys, and nothing ne hadden shame of hir nakednesse, how that the serpent, that was moost wily of alle othere beestes that God hadde maked, seyde to the woman, “Why comaunded God to yow ye sholde nat eten of every tree in Paradyss?” The womman answere: “Of the fruyt,” quod she, “of the trees in Paradys we feden us, but soothly, of the fruyt of the tree that is in the myddel of Paradys, God forbad us for to eten, and to eten of the fruyt of the tree, and eet it, and yaf to hire housbonde, and he eet, and anoon the eyen of hem bothe openden.” And whan that they knewe that they were naked, they sowed of fige leves a maner of breches to hiden hire membres. There may ye seyn that deedly synne hath, first, suggestion of the feend, as sheweth he here by the naddre; and afterward, the delit of the flesh, as sheweth here by Eve; and after that, the consentynge of resound as sheweth here by Adam. For trust wel, though so were that the feend tempted Eve—that is to seyn, the flessh—and the flessh hadde delit in the beautee of the fruyt defended, yet certes, til that resoun—that is to seyn, Adam—consented to the eteynge of the fruyt, yet stood he in th’estaat of innocence. Of thilke Adam tooke we thilke synne original, for of him flesshly descended be we alle, and engendred of vile and corrupt

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The Parson retells and interprets the Genesis story in order to explain the springing forth of sin into the human realm. He makes an explicit connection between the act of eating the fruit by first the woman and then the man, and the following state of sinfulness that not only these two humans but “we alle” must endure. He explains that the sin is passed genetically; all humans are “of him flesshly descended” and original sin, like an evolutionarily fortuitous mutation, becomes a part of each surviving human’s makeup. The Parson also employs the term “original sin” twice: “synne original” is the hereditary result of Eve’s interest and Adam’s cooperation in eating the fruit, and “original synne” is contracted at the very moment when the pure soul “is put in” the fleshly canvas of the body. The Parson therefore establishes the orthodox theology of “original sin” as both inherited and as an indissoluble element of the dualism between body and soul that characterize human life on earth.

The Parson attributes his theorizations to St. Paul, quoting the evangelist directly at the onset of his explication. But, the interpretation that he gives, by which Adam and Eve are both abstracted and transformed into elements of one human subject, is lifted directly from Augustine’s meditations on Genesis. Though elsewhere Augustine reads Adam and Eve as psychologically and spiritually distinct, in the *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, he posits the two characters and their respective reactions to the fruit as two distinct but mutually influential aspects of one person: “Non enim etiam ratio nostra deduci ad consensionem peccati potest, nisi cum delectation mota fuerit in illa parte animi, quae
debet obtemperare rationi tamquam rectori uiro.”\textsuperscript{14} In his \textit{Augustine’s Early Theology of the Image}, Gerald P. Boersma interprets the above, “Eve, offering the fruit to Adam, symbolizes the desires of the flesh warring against the spirit and enticing reason to consent through suggestion by thought and sense. When reason no longer ‘guards’ paradise but consents to let in the enemy—that is, when Adam takes the fruit and eats—the harmonious ‘wedded couple in the very self’ is rent asunder.”\textsuperscript{15} For Boersma, as for the Parson before him, Augustinian theorizations of Eden not only establish a simplistic narrative for understanding original sin, but also build a robust and nuanced psychological subject and investigate and interpret that subject’s diverse and often contradictory motivations.

I shall attempt to unpack and examine the 14\textsuperscript{th} century resonances of Augustine’s theorization of the self-as-married-couple, or the married couple functioning as one synthesized being, in the fourth chapter of this project. For now, let us pass over the complex resonances to which his theorizations give rise and instead note that though his interpretive work owes much more to Augustine than to Paul, and though he cites Augustine elsewhere no fewer than 25 times, Chaucer’s Parson here credits Paul alone with the formulation of original sin. Why? This is not a matter of compositional rectitude; as we know, the late 14\textsuperscript{th} century creative process relied much less upon supposed “invention” than our own, and was instead invested in the perhaps more sophisticated weaving together of disparate ideologies into a cohesive narrative. And yet, the Parson depends on a

\textsuperscript{14} Augustine, \textit{De Genesi contra Manicheos}, ed. Dorothea Weber, CSEL 91. “Reason can only be brought down to consenting to sin, when pleasurable anticipation is roused in that part of the spirit which ought to take its lead from reason, as from the husband and guide.” I use Gerald Boersma’s translation here. Gerald P. Boersma, \textit{Augustine’s Early Theology of Image: A Study in the Development of Pro-Nicene Theology} (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2016): 216.

\textsuperscript{15} Gerald P Boersma, \textit{Augustine’s Early Theology of Image: A Study in the Development of Pro-Nicene Theology}, 216.
rich system of patristic undergirding for his central tenets and prefers to assert his ideas alongside a comforting body of literary and theological support. Let us, then, take a moment to investigate his attribution of original sin to Paul.

I suggest that Chaucer’s Parson attributes an orthodox understanding of original sin to Paul because his narrative recognizes and attempts to delineate deep-seated differences between the Pauline and the Augustinian traditions with regard to human life on earth. This is a vast subject that can and should be the topic of its own set of inquiries quite apart from their medieval and early modern re-articulations; indeed, several excellent studies of this kind already exist. Augustine’s own meditations on Paul and his varied agreement and disagreements themselves provide useful fodder for such investigations. Nevertheless, now, as in the 14th century, the two Church fathers are typically lumped together as two figures who participate in one monolithic theorization of early Christianity. Indeed, the two share powerful conversation narratives that link them generically as well as theologically, and this similarity has perhaps exerted undo influence on later readers. Popular theologian Gary Wills traces a direct correlation between what he terms Paul’s “pessimisms” and Augustine’s theoretical framework. Peter Brown relates Augustine’s reliance on Pauline writings no fewer than 47 times in his acclaimed Augustine of Hippo. In critical scholarship on medieval and early modern texts, Paul and Augustine are often employed


17 “It is said he threw the human mind into prisons of sinful doom and predestination, subjecting human being to a ‘law in their members,’ trapping them in ‘the flesh,’ so that neither moral effort nor religious code can free them from this bondage. Paul inspired pessimisms as influential as those of Augustine and Luther and Pascal...” Gary Wills, What Paul Meant (New York: Penguin, 2007): 2.
interchangeably or together as totems of doctrinal Christian thought. As we see above in the *Parson’s Tale*, such a synthesis of the two figures must make sense, and must feel, intrinsically, to be accurate; perhaps it did to Chaucer himself. And yet, the Parson does not cite Paul and Augustine in the same breath, but rather superimposes the Pauline name on the idea that Augustine articulated much more overtly. Why?

I suggest that Chaucer’s Parson is attending to what Agamben refers to as Paul’s interest in the “time of now.” Agamben articulates Paul’s fascination with the strange time that exists between the event of the Resurrection, and the *parousia*, or end of days. This time is a remnant set apart from *chronos*, from linear history, which spans statically from the creation to the Resurrection. The remnant of messianic time is *ho nyn kairos*, ‘time time of now’: it exists beyond the fulfillment of prophesy, the event of salvation, and yet before the apocalyptic Judgment, and so it is constantly folding on itself, or shrinking, imploding on itself.

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18 “To follow out [a] Pauline model of reading would mean to discard altogether the model of woman as central, naked truth of the text, to rigorously pass through the text’s female body on the way to its male spirit, as Ambrose and others suggest. Augustine dismissed pagan fable as worthless precisely because he considered it to have only false of empty ‘spirit’ below its enticing letter.” Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989): 23. “The occasion of Augustine’s lament is sexual. Specifically, it is his ongoing susceptibility to sexual imaginings and erotic dreams, accompanied by feelings of great pleasure and sometimes by nocturnal emissions, long after his conversion to Christianity and to a life of chastity. As Peter Brown has argued, this is not to be read as the sign of some peculiarity in Augustine’s psyche, but rather as a powerful instance of the way sexuality had come to be seen, during the long development of Christian moral ideology since Paul...” Mark Miller, *Philosophical Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 22. “According to St. Paul, there are two kinds of sorrow over sin, *tristitia secundum Deum*, which works repentance unto salvation, and *tristitia secundum saeculum*, which works death (2 Corinthians 7:10). For Augustine *tristitia* is so unstable an emotion that he admits, even in the midst of an attack on Stoic apathy, that ‘it is doubtful whether it can ever be beneficial.’” Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991): 380.

19 “First you have secular time, which Paul usually refers to as *chronos*, which spans from creation to the messianic event (for Paul, this is not the birth of Jesus, but the resurrection). Here time contracts itself and begins to end. But this contracted time, which Paul refers to in the expression of *ho nyn kairos*, ‘the time of the now,’ lasts until the *parousia*, the full presence of the Messiah... Time explodes here; or rather, it implodes into the other eon, into eternity” (63). Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005): 63.
Though Agamben’s formulations are subtle, nuanced, and manifold, the essential point for my purposes is not revolutionary. Pauline Messianism has been widely tooted in recent years, by critical theorists like Agamben and Badieu, but also by liberal theologians and religious historicists as central to Paul’s teaching and therefore as contextualizing some of his cavalier or even vituperative attitude toward women, slaves, converts, and other groups of disenfranchised individuals. The new redemptive narrative claims that Paul was envisioning a short and tumultuous “last days” on earth, and so cared little for social or gendered distinctions, or even for social, economic, and cultural practices that elevated some and diminished or hurt others. Everyone should remain in his or her station, with little attention toward his or her earthly position or earthly troubles; the time of judgement was soon to be at hand, and such distinctions would melt away in the face of the world’s dissolution and the assumption of the righteous into the presence of God. All Paul asks of his fellow humans was that they inhabit the station or calling placed upon them during these final days and demonstrate their obedience and worship of God by fulfilling that purpose, knowing that it would not be their last or highest. Indeed, the experience the righteous aspired toward in heaven, Paul imagined, would be less like the paltry distinctions individual humans strive for on earth and more like a glorious unity.

The connection between Pauline Messianism and the Pauline theorizations of human origin and specifically of original sin has now yet received its critical due. Given his view of the human creature and its purpose, it seems likely that Paul imagined the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, and the introduction of sin and, especially significant for him, of mortality into the world, as the origin of the distinctions that the final coming would wash away. Indeed, Genesis 1-3 consistently presents distinctions and separations. First the
elements are parted, then diverse types of life articulated, then man and woman divided in an almost Alcibidian fashion. For Paul, Adam and Eve’s ill-fated consumption its resultant sin and death the world function as one more in a series of ruptures that divide creation more and more deeply from God and from the self. From that moment on, each human construction, but especially the law, indicates a further removal from grace: “Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. The law was brought in so that trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Rom 5.18-20).

As the above indicates, while Paul lays the groundwork for an inherited model of original sin, he does so in the context of attempting to guide his followers through the “time of now” and to the fulfillment of the second coming and the dramatic transition from a material life to a life with God. Therefore, Paul’s understanding of original sin is not the simplistic trope that Adam’s sin is erased or redeemed by a “second Adam” in Jesus. We must note that, though Paul believes Jesus has come, redemption has not yet been granted. The excerpt I quote from Romans employs the future tense when describing the fulfillment of the coming of the prophet: “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (emphasis mine). This English translation follows the Vulgate, which employs the future-tense verb “constituentur” to describe the coming fate of the righteous (justi constituentur multi). That is, Jesus’s life on earth began the process of redemption, but has not completed it. The distinctions, differences, and painful alienations that
characterize life on earth will be removed when he comes for a second time to enact judgment on the world and destroy it. Original sin is an emblem of those distinctions, differences, and alienations.

For Paul, then, the story of Eden and especially of the primary transgression must, indeed, be one of rupture. For him, death and sin are equivalent: “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.” I contend, however, that he is less interested in the mechanics of how original sin works, how exactly it is passed on to progeny, and what life might have been like had Eve never bitten the fruit. Instead, for Paul, this rupture is away of explaining the difference between the human world and the realm of God, which was, for him, at hand. It makes sense, then, that the Parson would ascribe his most damning portrait of original sin to Paul; the deeper and more defined the rupture in the garden, the more glorious would be the earth’s final days and the transition of the righteous into their natural state of unity with one another and with God.

Augustine of Hippo lived almost three hundred years after Paul, and interfaces with a radically different Christianity. Clearly Pauline theology and even Paul’s discussion of original sin had a profound impact on Augustine; he returned to Paul’s texts time and again in moments of struggle or hardship, and at one time even intended to write an entire commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul. But, Augustine’s conception of the “time of now” does not match Paul’s. Indeed, as Peter Brown writes, Augustine was initially swayed by Paul’s apocalyptic theories, but later shifted towards a new interpretation: “Previously, he had interpreted Paul as Platonist: he had seen him as the exponent of a spiritual ascent, of the renewal of the ‘inner’ man, the decay of the ‘outer’; after baptism, he had shared in
Paul’s sense of triumph: ‘Behold all things have become new.’ This idea of the spiritual life as a vertical ascent, as a progress towards a final, highest stage to be reached in this life, had fascinated Augustine in previous years. Now, he will see in Paul nothing but a single, unresolved tensions between ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit.’” Augustine famously turns to the Manichees as a temporary template for understanding this tension, and though he leaves them and later disparages his time with them in the Confessions, the tension that Augustine finds in Paul continues to permeate his thinking. And yet, his theorizations, particularly those on the origin of sin deviate widely from Paul’s. Brown puts it best: “If Paul had been forced to prove his assertions on original sin, Augustine believed he would have turned his readers’ attention, as Augustine did, to the extent of suffering in this world.”

Augustine’s project is necessarily more probative that Paul’s; he does not imagine himself to be the voice of an apocalyptic era. Put another way, life on earth holds more specifically spiritual meaning for Augustine than it did for Paul. Augustine likely believed in the second coming, but he has not Paul’s frenetic energy nor his lack of regard for the “temporary” constructions that humans must live with. For Augustine, it is likely that the day of judgment did not feel as though it were imminently at hand. Therefore, the political, social, and moral or ethical choices he and others around him made must have seemed to Augustine much weightier and more interpenetratingly connected with the life of the soul than they did for Paul.

Eden and the idea of the first transgression against God and its far-reaching results, therefore occupied a much more confusing and complex space in Augustinian thinking than

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21 Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo, 391.
it did for his predecessor. As I have indicated before, Augustine is typically touted the creator of original sin, and indeed his prolific works take up the topic time and time again. Augustine does not simply flesh out the theoretical and theological implications of the fall of man, but spends countless pages discussing the intricacies of what human life would have been like in Eden, how every human action or emotion might then have been experienced, and even how seemingly mundane activities such as eating, sleeping, and defecating would have been carried out in the time before the primary transgression and, relatedly, in what Augustine imagines Eden would have been like had there been no fall at all. The sheer volume of Augustine’s reflection on Eden, temptation, and sin has, I believe, stolidly reinforced Augustine’s place historically and theologically as the steadfast originator of the doctrine of original sin. Let us consider, for a moment, how different Augustine’s manifold and experimental commentaries are from the brief and authoritatively voiced theory of Paul. Surely had Augustine been utterly convinced of Eden’s purpose and of the function of the primary transgression, he, like Paul, would have expressed this conviction in a more straightforward way.

I contend, instead, that Augustine’s obsessive articulation and re-articulation of every nuance surrounding the Eden garden and the actions transpiring therein belie a central ambivalence in Augustinian Edenic thought. Because Augustine does not participate as fully as Paul in the ideology of an apocalyptic era, Eden does not fit as comfortably for him as a simple tale of one rupture after another, each of which brings the human creature and the surrounding natural world further and further away from unity with God. If the time of ultimate redemption is not, as yet, at hand, human history does not fall away from Augustine with the ease that it does for Paul. Therefore, the human origin story, while
clearly one of problematic disobedience and loss, must also contain some information as to how life on earth ought to be conducted.

Augustine therefore looks at Eden from two divergent perspectives. Through the first, Augustine sees a sinful creature rebelling against his creator and suffering the consequences throughout the course of human history. Through the second, however, Augustine interprets the Eden garden and the first humans with an anthropological gaze, attempting to understand how the superior life that was led before the fall might be asymptotically aspired toward and employed as an ideal by which to shape political, interpersonal, social, and moral action.

It is this second viewpoint within Augustinian writing that has largely been overlooked and which I will examine most intensively in the current project. Specifically, I am interested in interrogating the continuity that this anthropological view of Eden establishes between the primal garden and chronological historical life. That is, if Augustine imagines that the Eden garden holds secrets that humans in his moment could use to guide their real-world practices, he must believe that the space of Eden is not so wholly removed from the space of 4th century North Africa. Humans, and their actions, emotions, and beliefs, might not be exactly equivalent to the first humans Augustine images in Eden, but they must be close enough to be able to merit from the example set by those “noble savages.”

While the Pauline-inflected Augustinian articulations of original sin became Christian orthodoxy, boiled down into a child’s dour memorization lesson (“In Adam’s Fall we sinned all”), the spores of continuity that permeate Augustine’s writings find their

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rhizomatic expressions in the fertile ground of various experimental works which typically thrived outside the authorized theological tradition of the early or medieval Church. Such expressions likely permeate distinct and multifarious literary traditions beyond the scope of the current project. I shall, however, take up one particular tradition or, perhaps, a collection of interrelated traditions, which both engages directly with Augustinianism and which has in the last thirty years or so been examined critically as a locus for non-normative expressions of social and political constructs and psychological personhood. This is, of course, the late 14th-century vernacular tradition of Britain. The works of Gower, Langland, the vernacular romance authors, the Pearl poet and, especially, Chaucer, invoke a complex, multi-faceted, rich and contradictory Eden, the importance of which is not relegated to the punitive fall. Rather, such an Eden becomes a space for thinking through and reimagining such constituents of human life as language, labor, and love. This Eden does not rule definitively on these matters, but rather dilates and opens narrative to allow for multiple and often conflicting or contradictory views of how humans live naturally, and how they should strive to live. Eden, then, allows for just the kind of dialectical engagement that is emblematic of desire and is therefore inherent in the idea of the subject.

The invocation of a rich and multifarious Eden may be effectively understood through its relationship to the psychoanalytic theorization of origins by which Eden’s powerful potentiality for therapeutic or at least revelatory growth is inherent in its availability for processes of cyclical return. The psychoanalytic tradition is unique with regard to much of Western thought in its treatment of human origins as neither a backward beginning to be vilified, nor an idyllic golden age to be longed for. Instead, origins are neutral; their purpose is instructive, educational, and psychologically
revelatory without being either essentially good or essentially evil. Julia Kristeva is most clear in describing the therapeutic uses of a return to an originary state: “The recourse to psychoanalysis entails, among other benefits, the production of one of the rare discourses...it invites us to come back constantly to our origins (biographies, childhood, memories, family) in order better to transcend them.”23 Additionally, Freud’s revolutionary work linking mechanisms of normative desire with those of perversion, as well as Lacan’s understanding of the longing that constitutes every subject, build continuity between safe, natural, or pleasurable states and a state of removal, loss, or lack. I therefore employ the theorizations of the psychoanalytic tradition, not so much as a critical lens by which to interrogate that which is hidden in the vernacular texts I will read, but rather as a part of an ongoing tradition powerfully shaped by Augustinian ambivalence and continuing into contemporary criticism.

Contemporary critical accounts of medieval and early modern poetics, even those that are attentive to the significant divergences of poetic projects from monolithic theology, often take up authoritative Augustinianism unquestioningly, and employ Eden exclusively as a signifier for the fall. Carolyn Dinshaw employs the garden as a trope for the fallen language that infects the inept “Adam scriveyn”; Lee Patterson understands Chaucer’s Merchant’s Eden as a fusion of Adam’s expulsion and Proserpina’s tragic capture; L.O. Aranye Fradenburg understands Alcyone’s ill-fated desire for speech in the Book of the Duchess, her “primal scene of petition,” as a scene of the fall. The present study will attempt to redress the tendency to treat Eden only as a fall and thereby gain a better

understanding of the modes of expression and the questions of subjectivity and longing that Eden might also bring forward. I will necessarily treat the fall not exactly as a “thing indifferent,”24 but as one part of a dialectical discussion that is at least as invested in continuity as it is in rupture.25

The present project shall begin with the physical or literal garden and shall progress toward the metaphysical and metaphorical Eden. Naturally, I begin the first chapter with the romance tradition, which has ensconced the pleasure garden as a site for simultaneous intrigue, love-making, contemplation, and transformation. I take up the last of these, the transformative property of the Edenic garden, in order to theorize the relationship between an imagined origin and the changes enacted on both the psyche and on the meaning-making romance narrative. I employ Chretien de Troyes’s Eric and Enide as a proto-type of this kind of transformation, and lay it alongside Guillaume de Lorris’s Roman de la Rose in which the Otherworld is brought swiftly and incontrovertibly into the realm of the psychological through the Narcissus scene. Ultimately, I shall claim that the Edenic garden in these two seminal works permeates the 14th century vernacular romance tradition with a theorization of an Edenic originary space that can be visited and revisited for transformative catharsis.

The second and third chapters of the present work function in tandem as a development of my theorizations of Chaucer’s engagement with Augustinian ambivalence. Chaucer studies have long been occupied with Augustinian theology; studies that take up

14th-century theology and religious practice tend to be particularly invested in Chaucer's reworkings of Augustinian thought; within this tradition, D.W. Robertson emerges as a prolific commentator on Chaucer and the Christian tradition.26 More recently, Steven Kruger has employed Augustinian temporality to discuss 14th-century models of conversion, and Robert Edwards, Mark Miller, Carolyn Dinshaw, and others employ Augustine to understand Chaucerian constructions of desire.27 My own approach grows out of the latter tradition, but I wish to attend to the aspects of Augustinian thought often overlooked or blotted out by historically sanctioned Christian orthodox thought. I shall begin with the Miller’s Tale, aptly termed in recent years the true beginning of the Canterbury Tales. I suggest that attention to the ways in which the Miller’s representation of Alisoun evokes not simply a natural paradise, but an Edenic paradisal state, can be used to fill the lacunae that the critical conversations centered around the tale’s naturalism have laid bare. Alisoun, I suggest, simultaneously represents a prelapsarian Eden and a kind of individual that could only be constructed after the fall. Chaucer employs Augustine’s treatment of the fluidity between the perverse and the natural body, dependent upon his theorizations of Eden, in order to represent the particularly complex draw of Alisoun. That is, if perversity is characterized by that which opposes or defers an


an authentic impulse to attain something desirable, Alisoun herself embodies perversity. The Miller’s project, drawing on its Augustinian heritage, therefore cannot imagine an appropriate response to desire that is not also predicated on perversity. It is not rupture, then, but continuity and especially a return to an origin that is not foreign but rather all too familiar that gives Alisoun the ability to function as such a highly desirable figure and that aligns perversity almost indistinguishably with the natural.

I continue my investigation of Chaucer and Augustine with a chapter that reads the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* not as a hodgepodge of either thoughtlessly or brilliantly interwoven patristic theology employed contra her authentic and embodied self, but rather as a vehicle by which the relation between the affective self and the rational self is brought to light. Chaucer, I suggest, employs an Augustinian understanding of Edenic affect in order to theorize the corruption of the metaphysical being. I suggest that Augustine does not condemn human affective or emotional capacity for the fall, but rather deems it a failure of coordination between human affect and human will. Chaucer takes up Augustine’s theory of affect and employs it to characterize the Wife of Bath’s profound ambivalence toward her employment of both sex and patristic rhetoric in order to gain money, power, sex, and affection.

The fourth chapter takes up the *Menagier de Paris*, a 14th-century household manual that prescribes a course of proper behavior for the young wife of an upper middle strata household. I read the manual alongside Chaucer’s *Franklin’s Tale* in order to interrogate the Edenic theorizations of sacramental marriage in each. The *Menagier* characterizes an Eden as indelibly cut off from contemporary people when he chastises his wife, but he celebrates a continuity between the Eden in which marriage was first ordained and the
14th-century bourgeois world when he solicits her good will and help. Chaucer’s Franklin’s Tale employs the same duality in its imaginings of the marital state by contrasting Arveragus’s husbandly composure and the death threat he emotionally hurls at his hapless wife. The Franklin’s Tale reveals a dual understanding of origins to destabilize the social order, thereby compromising egalitarian relationships among men as much as it does the union between husband and wife.

The final chapter of this project charts one path that the late 14th century secular engagement with Augustinian ambivalence takes. I claim that the ideology that Edenic continuity fosters equality between all laborers on earth, propagated by John Ball and other Lollards, infuses the religious and political rhetoric of the 17th-century Diggers, for whom labor is not so much a product of the fall as it is a means to build a better, more Edenic, contemporary existence. John Milton takes up the Diggers’ rhetoric and employs it to theorize labor in a pre-fallen Eden. I claim that not only does labor constitute a bridge between an Edenic state and a fallen state, but that the similarly cultivated movements of desire between Adam and Eve may be reinvigorated after the fall and may, like labor, be employed in order to make a life outside the garden more like a life inside it.

Ferrante’s paradise garden revolves around a central tree: “a big white mulberry tree, which had a system of almost invisible channels: water flowed through them, falling like rain from the branches or coursing like a waterfall down the trunk.”28 The present project examines Edens that look like this one, but also their offshoots, resonances, and invocations which, like the water falling down the trunk of the mulberry, build not one

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stable idea of Eden and of the identities it allows, but rather many interpenetrating and symbiotic points of origin.
Mirroring Origins: Edenic Spaces in the Romance Tradition

Tennyson’s Arthur enters his Idylls of the King as a conqueror of the natural world. Britain has fallen into disrepair due to mismanagement; King Leodogran of Cameliard and his predecessors have been unable to curate their realm adequately and it is now overgrown and overrun:

For many a petty king ere Arthur came  
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war  
Each upon other, wasted all the land;  
And still from time to time the heathen host  
Swarmed overseas, and harried what was left.  
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,  
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,  
But man was less and less, till Arthur came (5-12).²⁹

Tennyson places “beast” and “man” in direct conflict with one another; as the balance of power in Cameliard shifts toward animality, the authority of the human necessarily gives way. Additionally, the realm of the beast here melds into other malevolent forces: violent warfare, heathenness, and the destruction of resources. The realm of the beast, then, is perhaps more accurately described as the realm of the non-human: non-Christian, irrational, unprincipled, and un-ruled. The creatures who perpetuate the destruction of Cameliard are not people at all, but rather people-like entities who sink the realm into a grotesque ooze of jungled dereliction. Indeed, Tennyson tells us that wolves and humans interbreed in this chaotic state, producing “wolf-like men, Worse than the wolves.” The animal, as such, is not Cameliard’s prime enemy; its greatest threat is in the influence, the quite literal fusion, that the non-human effects upon the human sphere.

When Arthur comes to aid the incompetent Leodogran (and wins Guinevere’s hand), he emerges as the superlative human knight who establishes order by asserting innate dominion:

Then he drave  
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and felled  
The forest, letting in the sun, and made  
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight  
And so returned (58-62).

Arthur conquers the non-human heathen and non-human beast simultaneously, and, in dramatic fashion, illuminates the land that has been darkened. Arthur’s masculinity and his humanity are symbiotically constituted by his opposition to and dominance over the non-human; he emerges as Christian against heathen, just knight against animalistic brutality, and, significantly, a kind of deific surveyor of the land, opening it for further mechanisms of control and development in future.

Fascinating, though, is Tennyson’s use of the term “returned.” Arthur is not imagined here to be the first or even the best man to establish his authority over the non-human. He is instead reestablishing the authority of human over non-human through his simultaneous conquest of heathen, beast, and forest. I suggest that this “return” to preeminence evokes the dominion of Adam. Indeed, Tennyson draws on Milton’s representations of Eden throughout the Idylls; here, the overgrown world that spirals out of control and produces monstrous creatures resembles the potential that Milton’s Eve sees in the wildly fecund garden that redoubles overnight and threatens to overcome the first humans’ scrupulous landscaping efforts.  

30. The struggle to assert the human as the

30 See Steven C. Dillon, “Milton and Tennyson’s Guinevere,” ELH 54 (1987): 129-155; Erik Gray, Milton and the Victorians (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). The passage I refer to from Paradise Lost is, of course, Eve’s concern in Book 9 that her and her husband’s efforts at pruning are exacerbating the garden’s rapacious growth:
controller of the non-human that Arthur exhibits, then, evokes the drama of human origins. It is through a return to these origins that Arthur attempts to establish his own version of Eden, a perfect kingdom.

The site of origin, however, far from being perfect itself, is also a site of struggle for power, and fraught with unmitigated desire, interaction with the demonic, and confusion over what is natural and that what is constructed. Any return to an origin is necessarily a return to the same dramas that the *Idylls* delineate, and in which the utopia that Arthur imagines must always be threatened and perhaps is ultimately required to fail. In evoking this complex and fraught state of origin, Tennyson also evokes a central topos of the 14th century Middle English romance tradition, which follow the narrative tradition established by Chretien de Troyes in imagining the tamed wilderness as a quasi-Edenic space that allows for, and requires, a troublesomely productive return to origin.

In what follows, I will delineate the complex dialectic between the worlds of the romance and Edenic origins as it appears in the normative French romance tradition and is passed along to the 14th-century Middle English romance as, indeed, it is passed along to Tennyson. I will be especially interested in demonstrating the permeable boundaries that exist between the human realm and the “Otherworld”; I will show that, far from functioning

Adam, well may we labor still to dress this garden
Still to tend plant, herb and flow’r
Our pleasant task enjoined, but till more hands
Aid us, the work under our labor grows,
Luxurious by restraint; what we by day
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
One night or two with wanton growth derides
Tending to wild (IX 205-212).

purely as a non-human realm by which the human is defined, the Otherworld functions as an Edenic analogue. The non-human is never truly non-human, but instead is one pole, one partner in conversation within the dialectical exchange by which the human is constituted. The non-human, then, especially when figured as origin, emerges as all too human. As I shall hope to demonstrate, the liminality of the Otherworld and the dramas it affords by which the individual figures his or her humanity in terms of dominion and in terms of a return to an originary state, are best understood as dramas of Eden. As such, these dramas infuse not only the romance tradition, but also the philosophical and theological poetics of Chaucer and his contemporaries through engagement with the Edenic narcissism of *The Romance of the Rose*.

The romance tradition, notwithstanding a critical renaissance in recent years, has typically taken the role of country cousin in the late medieval canon; the high vernacular poetics of Chaucer, Gower, the Pearl poet, Langland, and others have typically been afforded positions of prominence from aesthetic and philosophical perspectives. Such an attitude towards romance, regardless of how it has been constructed and how accurately it may reflect the critical mores of the day, does stand in rather stark opposition to the kind of tangible medievalism that romances connote and that historically has proved most salient popular audiences. The romance unapologetically engages in the fantasies that root the medieval literary tradition; fantasy spaces, especially, allow for the wish-fulfillment narratives in which a knight attains his lord’s lady, or in which a poor gentleman in rags is transformed through his own beneficence into a wealthy and generous man. These

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narrative elements fueled Tennyson and indeed infuse such twentieth-century as T.H. White’s *Once and Future King*. The stock Arthurian narrative’s popularity must not be allowed to overwrite its significance to the medieval cannon. Salient literary topoi including social mobility, interior worth as compared to hierarchical standing, the presentation and fluidity of gendered identity and sexual preference, and the intersection of a personal system of morals with a contractual paradigm of ethics, find their unadorned and almost bare expressions in the kind of alternate worlds created by the medieval romance.

The medieval romance has additionally been imagined to be as secular a project as could feasibly be imagined in a pre-Reformation Western Europe. Where other, higher, forms of poetry or narrative have intersected either overtly or tangentially with theological or metaphysical ideas, the romance has typically been thought to engage with the concerns of this world only.\(^{32}\) Its highest principles are the attainment of wealth, love, or glory, and the presence of a deity or a deific code of behavior only ever appears symbolically, as though the concerns of this world might be better understood by comparing them to the imaginary phantasms that haunt religion.

Such an understanding of medieval romance, however, obfuscates one of its primary literary accomplishments. That is, the romance, however secular, employs the language and imagery of a highly stylized Christian tradition in telling its narratives. One only need cursorily examine the pilgrimages of Parcival, the ascetic hermitage of Orfeo and Gawain,

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the pseudo-stigmata of Lancelot, or the legendary grail tradition in order to note that
Christian symbolism and even biblical rhetoric underscore and heighten the kinds of
fantasies that the romance deals in. It would be more accurate, and certainly yield more
fruitful investigations of the genre, then, to understand it not as divorced from biblical
resonances or even overt religious themes and topoi, but rather as participating in a
dialogue in the robust fantasy space, and with the decentralized or alternate set of terms,
figures, antagonists, and goals, that romance affords.

It is understandable, then, given the critical deemphasis of both the romance
tradition’s engagement with the fantasy space and its use of a ritualized Christian narrative,
that very little has been said regarding the proximity of the various gardens, woods, and
Otherworlds of late-medieval romance to an Edenic paradise. Critics are much more likely
to compare the liminal, naturalistic spaces of the romance world to paradise spaces in
Celtic and Welsh folklore such as the Early Irish sid, the Plain of Delights, the Land of
Promise, The Land of Youth, and the Land of the Living. Indeed, many critics, perhaps in
order to honor sufficiently the secularism of romance, follow the paradigm laid out nearly
one hundred years ago by Howard Rollin Patch in his PMLA investigation of the romance
Otherworld:

I shall not attempt to distinguish between the Earthly Paradise, heaven, the islands of the blessed,
and the Eden from which Adam was ejected, except to note the details of the individual cases. In
other words, I shall not study the development of the theme of Eden as opposed to the theme of an
earth-bound Paradise, nor even bother with classifications of that type.

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It will be my task in the pages that follow to push back against this tradition of a treatment of muddled paradisal tradition and to locate, especially in the 14th century Middle English texts, the invocations of a specifically Edenic space. I shall claim that, as later in Tennyson, those spaces that definitively provide indications of an Edenic space serve a particular narrative function. Those fantasy spaces that engage with the rich tradition of Eden and that recreate their own Edens within their structures allow for a psychoanalytic return to origins that effects psychic transformations on those who enter, who *return*, to Eden. The Eden space stands in, variously, for a hero’s personal, historical, and narrative origin; in revisiting that place of origin, by entering the Eden garden, he can also revisit those origins and can relive, and even rewrite, his own origin story. The geographic proximity of the Edenic space to the quotidian sphere of the historical human being, therefore, infuses the hero’s return to his origin and his resulting transformation, with a similar blossoming of psychic continuity.

In order to accomplish this investigation, we must grapple with the question Patch and his followers leave unaddressed: what are the qualities that make up a specifically Edenic fantasy space in the romance tradition? Northrup Frye famously employs the language of contract in order to differentiate between the two prevailing Christian fantasy spaces, the Edenic space and the utopian space:

In Christianity the two myths that polarize social thought, the contract and the utopia, the myth of origin and the myth of *telos*, are given in their purely mythical or undisplaced forms. The myth of contract becomes the myth of creation, and of placing man in the garden of Eden, the ensuing fall being the result of a breach of the contract... Instead of the utopia we have the City of God.35

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Frye’s insight is particularly useful in separating the two spaces temporally. Eden occupies a temporal past which the present person may look over her shoulder, as it were, to imagine. The utopian space is a future space or at least an idealized space occupying a vertically stacked plane above the present person; the utopia is what might be but currently is not. The utopia or, as Frye indicates, the Augustinian city in which the righteous achieve their ideal state of being, depends upon a teleological completion of the Christian narrative. That is, the end goal of any Christian pilgrim’s progress must be the Holy City.36

The Eden, by contrast, depends upon a covenant which is first and primarily established between God and man: God provides the means for life, the potential for bliss, and the unity of himself with his creation. The human, for her part, is tasked with caring for the garden, the naming of animals, conjugal pleasures and responsibilities, and the self-restraint to prevent the consumption of that which is forbidden. As Frye posits, the fall is the result of the breach of this contract. But, as Frye indicates by his insistence on the centrality of covenant or contract to the formation of Eden, this breach does not negate the creation nor the perseverance of the covenant. This is, the humans break the tenets of the covenant, but the covenant itself is not nullified. Rather, as the Genesis narrative vividly portrays, the covenant is a malleable, fluid, and above all, a redemptive device. Abraham does not have to kill Isaac, and the world, though flooded, is not entirely destroyed, but is newly populated with the righteous. We may, therefore, suggest that while an Eden is

36 I am not more specific at this juncture about the distinction or overlap between the utopian Holy City or City of God and the afterlife heaven. It is my sense that while both occupy the temporal future space in the imagination of the present person, they also enjoy a number of substantial differences. Primarily, the City of God is occupied much more with theorizations of polity than is the more nebulous heaven or paradise. I should very much like to work through these distinctions in future.
divided from a utopia by nature of its contract, that very contract allows for the potential that the Eden may be reconstructed or reclaimed. Significantly, the reclaiming of the Edenic state does not depend on the teleological fulfillment of a linear endgame. Frye adds this important insight to the narrative; the Eden does not occupy the future space of the utopia. Instead, the Eden is an origin that can be revisited, rearticulated, even recreated.

How, then, can we recognize the Eden as differentiated from the utopia, but also from Patch’s Earthly Paradise, heaven, or islands of the blessed? We ought first to begin with the garden. Late medieval monastic communities physically built a kind of Eden, governed by covenant and which enabled and even encouraged a return to an Edenic state. The associations between the Garden of Eden and the medieval garden in general are, is, if not ubiquitous, at least well established and far-reaching. In his *History of Gardens*, Christopher Thacker claims that the medieval ideal garden or fantasy garden typically recalls the description of fecund plenty that characterizes the Garden in Genesis.37

The cloistered garden, however, takes on particular theoretical significance when it is associated with the Garden of Eden. Elisabeth B. Macdougal draws the analogy between the peaceful garden of the monastery and an Edenic paradise in her *Medieval Gardens*, specifically employing Frye’s distinction between the holy city and the originary garden:

Elsewhere it is the monastic cloister itself, namely, the central covered arcade, rectangular or square, from which the main monastic buildings (church, dormitory, refectory, cellary) radiated, which is compared to the heavenly paradise or Jerusalem. The green lawn of the cloister garden refreshes the eyes of the beholders and recalls their minds the *amoenitas* of the future life. The tree at the center of this garden is a reminder of the Tree of Life of the earthly paradise.38

Macdougal separates out the “cloister itself” from the cloister garden; the cloister buildings which variously include quarters for sleeping, eating, working, and praying.

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represent the political structure of the City of God. The cloistered garden, on the other hand, evinces a pleasing mixture of order and containment with an unabashedly fertile natural world, thereby evoking the Eden garden. Monks can effectively move between the two idealized spaces, the holy city and the Eden garden, simply by walking from the refectory to the garden.

The cloister walls and buildings enclose the garden, keeping it within strict stone boundaries. But, at the same time, the garden reminds man of a primordial natural world, established before man was created and ordained by principles vastly superior to those available to the mere human mind. The cloistered garden serves as a symbol or representation of the abundance and prosperity of the state man was created for and initially located within: “Man might no longer be dwelling in the beautiful Garden of Eden, but he was still led to recognize the beauty of nature around him, also part of God’s creation—the beauty of verdant, flower-strewn fields, of fruitful orchards, of shady valleys.”  

The monastic garden therefore embodies not only the blooming perfection of Eden, but also the liminality of that space, its simultaneous tractability or orderliness, and primeval, sanctified qualities which are beyond human making or even unmediated human understanding. It is specifically the monastery’s careful dialectic of outdoor and indoor spaces, inscribed into the spatial planning of the building and, relatedly, into the daily and weekly routines, that allows for the Edenic naturalism of the garden to penetrate the monk’s conception of himself so fully. Like Marvell’s solitary gardener, the monk could commune with the natural world in a way that was wholly understood, accepted, and even encouraged by his vocation.

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39 Elisabeth B. Macdougal, Medieval Gardens, 52.
The medieval cloistered garden functions as an Edenic space in the imaginations of the monks occupying the cloister, as well as in its physical characteristics. Mary W. Helms offers a fascinating anthropological study of the early medieval cloistered garden; Helms claims that the place/space of the cloister’s garden functions as a location for the monks’ subjective relationship with the divine, as both related to and somehow outside of the ritualized methods of communication with God. Helms calls the cloistered garden: “A place of connections and mediations between cosmological realms where sacred spaces were linked to the cosmos and where liminal monks, while individually pursuing the promise of an eternal spiritual life, as a community of holy men formally dedicated to the ongoing liturgical praise of God (the *opus Dei*), composed a point of conjunction between heaven and earth, between God and humanity in general.”

For Helms, then, the peculiar ability that the garden has to function as a space for engagement with the divine and also as a reaffirmation of the human, is facilitated by the garden’s association with the Eden. In general, medieval monks spent much of their solitary existences attempting to live after the example of a pre-lapsarian Father Adam: “Striving to reverse original sin and to recreate sacred time, they pursued nothing less than the pure, idyllic, Edenic state of human existence that had pertained at the original creation.” The cloister garden was the symbolic space within the monastery most suited to this particular ideal; its own paradisal properties and its placement within the geographic ordering of the monastery in general, allowed medieval monks to imagine themselves to be living before

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the fall of man, still participating in sacred time, while also fulfilling their vocations in “real time.”

Helms explores this particular function of the cloister garden, examining the special rituals which the garden was used for by the resident monks. She particularly focuses on repetitive Sunday processions, during which the monks would take ritual walks around the cloister garden. These walks ostensibly served to bless and purify the space, but Helms notes that they had a latent signification related to the monks’ nostalgic yearning for pre-lapsarian life:

More specifically, the repeated processions can be understood as constantly (re)evoking the identification accorded to the garth by its own symbols as a site of Edenic paradise, a physical setting of creational time made present for the brothers who, as would-be Adams, could advance in formal processional order around its border in close threshold proximity to the paradisiacal garden, but whose still imperfect state of spirituality prevented them from formally (ritually) entering it.  

For the medieval monk, then, the cloistered garden embodies the liminal space of Eden, and accordingly functions as a space in which the dream of leading a pre-lapsarian life, naturalistic and spiritually simplified, could be entertained without the renunciation of necessary quotidian tasks of the monk within his monastery. The monk’s weekly circumambulations mark the garden as a sanctified space and this performative act of “marking” allows the monks to participate, over and over, in Adam’s organization of a perfect natural world.

There are, then, specific recognizable qualities of the monastic or cloistered garden that allow this garden to function as a kind of quasi-Eden or, as Frye would have it, an Edenic origin predicated upon a renewable contract; let us attempt to identify these

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42 Helms uses “garth” here to refer to an enclosed outdoor space, typically beside a dwelling or other structure, and serving as the yard belonging to that building. Mary W. Helms, “Sacred Landscape and the Early Medieval European Cloister: Unity, Paradise, and the Cosmic Mountain,” 441.
qualities here. First, the monastic Edenic garden is enclosed. The Genesis garden is bordered on all sides by tributaries and, later, it is protected by an army of cherubim and a flaming sword.\textsuperscript{43} The monastic garden, similarly, is enclosed within the principal claustral structures of the monastery.

Next, the monastic garden, like the Edenic garden, contains within its enclosed borders all manner of alimentation and habitation necessary to the comfortable existence of man. The fecund prosperity of the Genesis garden is indicated by the manifold options for food and the verdant, blooming state of the garden itself.\textsuperscript{44} In obedience with the mandate that the garden facilitate the comfortable life of the humans, the monastic garden attempts to keep in close proximity, and within its walls, all elements necessary to the community life of its inhabitants. The Rule of St. Benedict states that “whenever possible the monastery should be so laid out that everything essential, that is to say water, mills, garden, and workshops for the plying of various crafts is found within the monastery walls.”\textsuperscript{45} Not only does such layout make possible St. Benedict’s central edict, \textit{ora et labora}, it also causes the monastic garden to resemble the Edenic garden in function as well as in façade. Indeed, fruits and vegetables for the monks’ table were grown in the cloister gardens, as well as the grapes for their wine, herbs and medications for both spiritual and physical purposes, and flowers. The cloistered garden(s), then, met virtually every physical

\textsuperscript{43} “And a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise, which from thence is divided into four heads” (DR 2:10). “And he cast out Adam; and placed before the paradise of pleasure Cherubims, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (3:24) This citation, as all others that follow it, is taken from the Douay-Rheims Bible. \textit{The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version}. (Charlotte: St. Benedict Press, 2009). Future biblical references will be given by book, chapter, and verse, parenthetically.

\textsuperscript{44} “And the Lord God brought forth of the ground all manner of trees, fair to behold, and pleasant to eat... “(DR 2:9).

need of its community in its cultivated bounty; at the very least the fiction or fantasy of the
garden’s self-sufficiency serves to emphasize its connection with the Eden garden.

 Associated with the fertility of the garden and its all-encompassing ability to sustain
human life is the cloistered garden’s appeal to the five senses. Though related to the
garden’s overabundance, the garden’s sensory appeal highlights its ability to transport the
visitor phenomenologically, as well as theoretically, to the Edenic realm, the earthly
paradise. The garden’s pleasurable qualities were thought to encourage communion with
the divine. Bright flowers and leafy greenery appealed to the eye, of course, along with
running water, geometric organization of plants and other items, and functional objects of
beauty like vineyards and trellises. Food stuffs obviously appealed to taste, and we might
imagine that the quiet of the monastic community, combined with running water and the
wind rustling through leaves would have provided a welcome respite from other noisier
locales. Tactile sensations could have been achieved through pleasant labor and in seated
meditation. Carole Rawcliffe engages in a fascinating study of the specific properties of
scent in the medieval and early modern cloistered garden; she posits that pleasing odors
not only were thought to dispel the evils attendant on miasma and to encourage health, but
that they evoked the immortality of a paradisal state. Such scents would have come from
flowers, herbs, and freshened air.47

46 “Within [medieval gardens], the five senses were indulged by scented herbs, brightly colored flowers and
foliage, and soft textures.” Susan Jagger, “Medieval Monastic Gardens: Recreating Paradise through Geometry

47 “To understand why the fear of bad smells and miasmas was so overwhelming in the Middle Ages, we need
first of all to remember that Purgatory and hell alike were associated with the vile stench of pitch and
sulphur. Conversely, a floral perfume of inexpressible sweetness permeated Heaven, which was often
described as a hortus delicariarum, the celestial equivalent of the terrestrial Eden lost by Adam and Eve.
‘There lilies and roses always bloom for you, smell sweet and never wither’, rhapsodized one ecstatic monk at
the prospect of odours ‘breathing eternal bliss into the soul.’” Carole Rawcliffe, “’Delectable Sightes and

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Thus far, the Eden space might not seem to diverge from any Christian paradise; indeed, it rather resembles the heaven that Milton’s angels enjoy, or the lands of plenty promised as rewards to the faithful. And, indeed, the element of contemplation, which the fecund profusion of the garden fosters and which the monks must engage in as part of their vocation, also enhances the proximity of the garden to a heavenly space. This is, however, specifically an earthly paradise. Contemplation of the divine here is fostered not simply by the presence of the divine, as in a heavenly space, but rather by a constant and thankful engagement with his creation. It is specifically the flowers, the food, the “fragrant smelles” and the pleasing vistas and verdant resting places that allow not only for engagement with the divine, but also for a kind of celebratory fusion with the natural world.

The unity with the natural world and, thereby, with the divine that the carefully planned garden cultivates in its inhabitants stems not only from contemplation, but also from work. Monks were encouraged to work in the cloistered garden in order to perform their most human task. As types of Adam, the monks were able not only to observe and inhale their surroundings, but quite literally to create them: “Manual labor was recognized as devotional work by the monks, particularly work done in the garden.” Indeed, the design and maintenance of the garden required monks to take on roles both of god-like creator and of subservient caretaker. This fusion of roles emphasizes the earth-bound quality of the Edenic garden, as opposed to its celestial analogue; the human creator geometrically designs, plants, and tends his garden, and then leans back to enjoy his work and, through it, to contemplate the beneficence of the divine.

_Fragrant Smelles’: Gardens and Health in Late Medieval and Early Modern England.” Garden History 36 (2008): 7._

_Susan Jagger “Medieval Monastic Gardens: Recreating Paradise through Geometry and Divinity,” 633._
I claim, then, that a garden which is enclosed, which provides all the necessities for comfortable human life, which engages the five senses by its abundance, which fosters contemplation, and which requires human work for its maintenance, is specifically Edenic in nature. When such a garden is invoked, specifically in medieval romance, the fantasy space is an Edenic space, and therefore enables, or even requires, a transformative return to origin for those who engage with that particular space.

I have, up to this point, focused primarily on the monastic garden. Since my purpose is demonstrating the relationship between the medieval garden and the imagined Garden of Eden, the monastic garden is singularly useful: monks were encouraged to behave, to the best of their abilities, as new Adams, and their lives were modelled upon the balanced dimensions of labor and reflection that best reflected the Adamic lifestyle. The monastic garden shall, therefore, remain my primary set of examples of actual medieval gardens, and will be the primary garden model I will use in order to assess the Edenic qualities of various romance fantasy spaces. I would be remiss at this moment, however, were I not to mention that manifold other garden styles existed in the late Middle Ages, each possibly holding its own claim to Edenic qualities. Sylvia Landsberg’s excellent *The Medieval Garden* outlines a variety of other gardens and elucidates each one’s respective purpose. Particularly salient for romance purposes might be the “pleasure park,” which often contained its own enclosed garden known as Le Petit Paradis, and the kitchen garden which, like the monastic garden, would provide much of the vegetal sustenance required by even a large royal household.49 These garden styles require their own detailed investigations and readings through the Edenic lens; I would like very much to undertake

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this task at a later date. For the present, however, I will simply employ these examples of other gardens to demonstrate that the monastic garden, while drawing on these other garden types and also influencing them, is unique in its ability to combine a utilitarian capacity with an aspect that encourages relaxation and reflection. The pleasure park and the kitchen garden separate out these two functions; the monastic garden unites them, thereby proving a most useful conduit for my claim of continuity between an Edenic landscape and a post-Edenic world.

Let us turn to the paradigmatic romance texts of Chrétien de Troyes for an example of the Eden garden’s evocation in the romance tradition, and the transformation it yields. Chrétien’s *Erec and Enide* employs a specifically Edenic garden in order to allow for a psychological return to narrative origins. In brief: Eric and Enide are headed homewards after the bulk of their narrative when they encounter the enclosed fortress of Brandigan and, upon hearing of a mysterious and dangerous adventure within, Erec insists on visiting. Though the very king of the place discourages it, Erec insists on experiencing the mystical Joy of the Court, though he does not know to what this might lead. He is then escorted to a beautiful garden ringed by stakes, each of which bears the head of an unfortunate knight who entered the garden. Erec, unperturbed, enters the garden and within it encounters a beautiful maiden lounging on an outdoor bed. As Erec approaches her, he is accosted by a knight in vermilion armor, who demands a fight to the death. The two fight lustily, but Erec ultimately routs his crimson attacker, and demands an explanation of the strange garden. The defeated knight explains: “That pucele, who is sitting there, loved me from childhood and I loved her. It was a source of pleasure to us both and out love grew and improved until she asked a boon of me without first saying what it was. Who would refuse his lady
anything?"50 The promise, however, entailed that the knight could never leave the garden until he was defeated in combat. “Thus my lady thought to keep me for a long duration, since she did not think that any knight would ever come unto this garden who could outdo me. Thus she thought to keep me all the days of my life with her: completely in her power, in prison.”51 The knight’s oath placed him in a double bind; his chivalry demanded that he obey his lady and keep his word, but it also demanded that he fight with all of his strength against any assailant. He was, then, trapped in the garden until Erec set him free by besting him in combat, thereby also setting into motion the mystical rejoicing known as the Joy of the Court.

The strange Joy of the Court episode provoked heated debate in early and mid-twentieth century Chretien scholarship. Much of this controversy focused on potential precursors to the episode; Helaine Newstead’s 1936 “The Joie De La Cort Episode in Erec and the Horn of Bran” for instance takes up Celtic and Welsh traditions that might explain the title of the adventure and the symbolism of the horn.52 However, as William Sayers pointed out in 2007, recent critics who write on Erec and Enide have all but abandoned the Joy of the Court. Sayers attempts to refocus attention on this episode with a fresh look at the significance of its title. He links “Joie de la Cort” linguistically with the Early Irish sid

51 Ensi me cuida retenir ma dameisele a lonc sejor; ne cuidoit pas que a nul jor deüst an cest vergier antrer vasaus qui me deüst outrer. Par ce me cuida a delivre, toz les jorz que j’eüsse a vivre, avoc li tenir an prison (6040-6047).
(Otherworld), claiming, "The active duality of Irish sid would have been deconstructed as medium (cort) and message (joie)."\(^{53}\)

In drawing this comparison, Sayers suggests a connection between the Joy of the Court and the Otherworld that appears in many Irish legends and pieces of folklore. He claims that these unreal locations filled with a kind of supernatural beauty, "gardens and orchards ever in bloom and/or in fruit, apples that endlessly flourish without depletion, eternal youth," are evoked by the description of the garden in which Erec finds the Red Knight and his pucele, and that therefore \emph{Erec and Enide} partakes in a Celtic folkloric tradition in which the central figures encounter a variety of paradisal spaces.\(^{54}\) I shall build on Sayer's argument to note that Erec and Enide do indeed enter a paradisal space, but a specific, rather than general, space, and one that has at least as much resonance with a Christian biblical tradition as it has with Celtic folklore.

While some readers have commented on the qualities of the enclosed city or garden in the Joy of the Court episode, few have taken up the function of the Edenic garden in any serious way. Margaret Burrell, for instance, refers to the garden as a “quasi-Eden” but does not follow up her suggestion with any investigation into the way in which this kind of Eden might function.\(^{55}\) I claim that Eden is obviously evoked by the description of the garden; that is, a reader was \emph{meant} to think of Eden when confronted with this episode, and the

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\(^{53}\) "Irish story is replete with beautiful young women found in, or native to, loci amoeni either with explicit identifications as the Otherworld- variously, \emph{Mag Mell} [The Plain of Delights (or ‘Pleasant Plain,’ to retain the alliterative effect)], \emph{Tir Tairngiri} [The Land of Promise], \emph{Tir na nÓg} [Land of Youth], \emph{Tir mBuadaig} [Land of the Living (i.e. Immortals)]- or strongly reflective of it..." William Sayers, "\emph{La Joie de la Cort (Erec et Enide)}, Mabon, and Early Irish sid [peace, Otherworld]" \emph{Arthuriana} 17 (2007): 17-18.

\(^{54}\) William Sayers, "\emph{La Joie de la Cort (Erec et Enide)}, Mabon, and Early Irish sid," 10-27.

episode in fact employs the recognizable qualities of the monastic garden tradition in order to purposefully to invoke and Edenic space.

The enclosed and self-sufficient city already gives the reader the sense of an Edenic space. It is cut off from all communication and trade with the surrounding regions and produces all the products that its inhabitants require within its own walls; in this, the city evokes some sort of utopia or urban paradise. The garden in which the Joy of the Court may be found is enclosed, nesting-egg fashion, within the enclosed city:

Mes ne fet pas a trespasser, por langue debatre et lasser, que del vergier ne vos retraie lonc l'estoire chose veraie. El vergier n'avoit anviron mur ne paliz, se de l'air non; mes de l'air est de totes parz par nigromance dos li jarz, si que riens antrer n'i pooit se par un seul lei n'i antroit, ne que s'il fust toz clos de fer (5685-5695).

The enclosed garden supports all kinds of plants and fruits from disparate regions, and in which wildlife could coexist peacefully, characteristic of a classical locus amoenus, an idyllic and often pastoral natural scene. This is also the kind of abundance that can comfortably sustain human life, as well as a pleasing and therapeutic environment:

And there were flowers and ripe fruit all summer and all winter, and the fruit has the peculiar property that although it could be eaten the rein, it could not be carried out: anyone who tried to take some away could never discover how to get out again, for he could not discover the exit until he put the fruit back in its place. And there is under heaven no bird, however pleasing its song and its ability to gladden and delight a man, that could not be heard therein, and there were several of each sort. And the earth, however great its extent, bears no spice or medicinal plant of use in any remedy that was not planted therein, and there were plenty of them.
insistence that flowers and fruit bloom all winter long emphasizes the garden’s ability to provide for its inhabitants; clearly the garden provides ample food stuffs, as well as spices and medicines for the alimentation and facilitation of human life within its walls. It is as though the garden itself caters to the pucale's desire to entrap her lover forever; it obligingly provides all manner of food as well as any remedy that either might need should they fall ill.

This same passage demonstrates the garden’s appeal to the five senses. The visual and gustatory are immediately obvious in the vivid description of the fecund garden and the demonstration of its over-fertility. The garden contains spices and flowers which must stimulate the olfactory sense, as well as the manifold songs of birds which seem to delight the ear throughout the day. We may imagine the garden to contain the same kinds of tactile pleasures that the monastic garden might have done and, indeed, the pleasures of touching are highlighted by the position of the pucale reclining on “a silver bed covered by a sheet embroidered with gold.”

The pucale’s static position also demonstrates the garden’s ability to promote solitary contemplation. Though we cannot be certain that the pucale is spending her time in meditative thought, she certainly spends the majority of her time in the enchanted garden quietly positioned therein with little else to do. By contrast, her lover has been consistently employed in the gristy business of routing every knight that comes into the garden. In doing so, he maintains the sanctity and the hermetic division between the garden and the outside world, thereby cultivating the Edenic space of the garden with his sword. In him,

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58 i. lit d’argent covert d’un drap brodé a or (5830-5832).
the figures of Adam and of Michael with his fiery sword elide; the inhabitant of the garden is also simultaneously the protector of that space. The Otherworldly garden, then, is specifically Edenic, and is modeled on the monastic garden’s Edenic valence. I shall demonstrate here that when medieval vernacular romances specifically invoke Eden, specifically, they do so in order to enable the psychoanalytic return to origin for key players in their narrative.

The episode of *Erec and Enide* that terminates Erec’s questing and solidifies his return to an honorable and knightly persona, the Joy of the Court, is perhaps the strangest of Chrétien’s corpus. It is exceptionally unmotivated: the “problems” that the narrative presents, Erec’s removal from chivalric pursuits and his irritation with and testing of Enide, have already been resolved. Erec and Enide are reconciled, and Erec has won many honors and demonstrated himself to be a brave, valorous, and active knight. There is no need for Erec to embark on another adventure, except that the enclosed city seems to draw him in, and that once the opportunity of the adventure is presented it would violate Erec’s knightliness to abstain.

The Joy of the Court is also the most fantastical or otherworldly episode of *Erec and Enide*, and so becomes significant to proponents of Frye’s seminal understanding of romance, which revolves around its magical elements. The Joy of the Court then, though it seems unnecessary to the plot of the narrative, is important or even essential in order to fit *Erec and Enide* into a romance frame. Indeed, the very lack of motivation, the narrative refusal to justify the episode, solidifies its standing as a salient moment that is constitutive
of, rather than superfluous to, romance. The narrative aim of the romance, we may infer, is not simply to resolve the plot problems that it puts forward, but rather to suggest, interpret, and resolve emotional or affective elements as well. We must then attend to the Joy of the Court episode as one of primary significance to the romance despite or, as Frye would have it, precisely because it is unmotivated by the romance plot. We may then assume that the Joy of the Court episode plays a role in the affective economy of the romance.

To elaborate on the above point for just a moment, we might note that the Joy of the Court episode does indeed resolve narrative dissonance and contribute to plot movement for the Red Knight and his pucele, but does not do so for Erec or for Enide. We might then direct our inquiries toward the interaction between narrative resolution for the two figures trapped in the garden, and its resulting or concurrent effect on the emotional lives of the central knight and lady. Indeed, Erec and Enide do have quite a bit in common with the unfortunate pair they discover. In this sense, then, critics are right to claim that the Joy of the Court episode is entirely unmotivated. But, it does not follow then that the episode be unnecessary. I suggest that the resonances or resemblances between the Red Knight and Erec, and between Enide and the pucele, provide one way in which we might understand the psychic or affective transformation that the central figures experience when they enter the Eden garden.

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It is not perhaps until Enide comforts the *pucele*, distraught over losing her captive, and discovers that she and the *pucele* are cousins, “you are my father’s niece, for he and your father are brothers,”\(^{60}\) that the full narrative import of the mysterious episode may be properly understood. In the genetic similitude of the two women, fathered by two brothers, Enide finds herself looking into a face very much like her own. The striking resemblance between Enide and the *pucele* is not simply biological, but also biographical. The *pucele*’s unhappy capture of her lover recalls Enide’s distress at the beginning of the romance at being the cause of Erec’s lazy disinterest in knightly pursuits, and her shame and despair that set the entire course of events into motion. As any reader of this romance will recall, the narrative is initiated by Enide’s distress over her husband’s over-devotion to her (and excessive time in their bedchamber) and his neglect of his knights, tournaments, and other chivalric duties. Erec is so dismayed by Enide’s perception of his weakness that he forces her to join him on a series of difficult quests during which he constantly berates her and constructs emotionally manipulative tasks to test her fortitude and devotion. Enide’s encounter with the *pucele*, who has devalued and ostracized her knight in much more egregious fashion, allows Enide to export her own unhappy feelings and discomfort with her husband onto her doppleganger, effectively leaving those struggles behind in the sealed garden and sallying forth, unencumbered by such emotional baggage.

Similarly, the Red Knight double-bound by the conflicting demands of chivalry, performs Erec’s ambivalent position at the beginning of the romance. Erec’s love and devotion for Enide cannot be understood as unchivalric; indeed, the extreme veneration he expresses for his wife is entirely in keeping with the codes of courtly behavior. Nor does he

\(^{60}\)vos estes niece mon pere, car il et li vostres sont frere (6209-6210).
shirk his responsibilities to his comrades; Erec continues to provide generously for the knights of his court. And yet, Erec’s position is shameful, and first Enide, then the couple in tandem, feel the burden of this shame and must seek to rectify it.

The Red Knight and his pucele may then be read as doubles, or alternates, of Erec and Enide. They embody and perform the very qualities in the two protagonists that motivated the various quests that propel the romance narrative forward. Indeed, I suggest that it is only through the observation of and interaction with their prototypes that Erec and Enide can fully experience the satisfaction of their return to one another, and be allowed to return to their kingdom confident in having transformed shame into joy. Erec is able to project his rupture with Enide onto the Red Knight and his pucele, and to acknowledge his motivations for the first time in the narrative, to demystify and confront his fears, and ultimately to accept his dual role as husband and knight. Enide, too, can export her shameful experience onto the pucele and thereby return to court confident in her restored good name.

Significantly, the Red Knight and his pucele are not seen to reconcile; indeed, the pucele’s downcast looks and her sighs and sobs are enough to demonstrate that the Red Knight has no intention of continuing the romantic connection that proved so disastrous to his freedom. In exporting this “unhappy ending” onto their doubles, Erec and Enide may safely restore their own respective autonomy and the easier relationship it affords them both at court and abroad.

Eden directly informs the representation of the garden in the Joy of the Court episode; in its evocation of a liminal Eden, which exists both spatially and theoretically, the garden serves as an ideal physical location for a romance adventure, and also
simultaneously as a fantasy-space which Sayers so tellingly refers to as an “emotional state.”\(^6\) As a fantasy realm, the site in which the plight of the Red Knight and his pucele, and Erec’s climactic victory play out, allows Erec and Enide to therapeutically reframe their own difficulties therapeutically. The Edenic liminality of the garden essentially functions to dilate the representation of the individual, and to allow Erec and Enide to return to their narrative origins in order to rehabilitate their own story.

It is tempting to imagine that a return to an Edenic origin such as the one that Chrétien constructs in *Erec and Enide* allows for a conflicted figure, weighed down by the responsibilities and obligations of his linear or historical narrative, to visit an inhabit an earlier, more simple form of his existence and thereby experience either a temporary or permanent release from his painful situation. This is not, however, the kind of interaction that Chrétien creates for Erec and Enide when they encounter the Red Knight and the pucele in the garden. The Red Knight and the pucele are indeed embodiments of Erec and Enide’s past selves, but those past selves are not the autonomous, simple, joyful beings that we might assume an Eden would hold. Instead, they are the fragmented ones, trapped, each lacking liberty and made miserable by their longing for one another and their longing for autonomy and wholeness.

The interaction that is so transformative for Erec and for Enide then is the reframing that they are able to undertake, casting themselves as the whole and autonomous figures against which the Red Knight and his pucele enviously view and judge their own insufficiency and lack. I’d suggest, of course, that the entire process is imaginary; the Red Knight and the pucele are stock and rather two-dimensional figures built so that Erec and

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\(^6\) William Sayers, “*La Joie de la Cort (Erec et Enide), Mabon, and Early Irish sid,*” 17.
Enide may export their historical and narratological fragmentation onto them and therefore imagine themselves to be whole, autonomous, and healed. Nevertheless, as far as Chrétien’s tale is concerned, the process is a functional one, and Erec may assume his father’s vacated kingship as a rehabilitated and fully functional chivalric hero. Through a dialectical engagement with the image of their past fragmentation, Erec and Enide can imagine themselves to be whole.

Let us now employ this theorization of the Eden garden in romance with a text more traditionally associated with the theological and philosophical pursuits that Chaucer later engages in, but also squarely placed in the French vernacular tradition: *Roman de la Rose*. Though removed from the romance tradition and from the critical discussion of romance by its complex allegorical form and its long philosophical excursuses, the *Rose* nevertheless participates in, exemplifies, and parodies the tropes, motifs, and narrative structures of the 12th-century French romance. The first portion, written by Guillaume de Lorris some forty years before the cheekier Jean de Meun section, is particularly salient in its simultaneous representation and gentle critique of normative romance conventions.62 I will, then, turn to one of the more famous moments in the *Rose* in order to examine another poetic garden that, like Chrétien’s garden in *Erec and Enide*, allows the protagonist to

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62 Mark Miller’s formulations on the Rose and his justification for developing these in a text predominantly invested in the philosophical and theoretical valence of Chaucer’s corpus may be useful here: “I will argue that the *Roman de la Rose*, through its development of a rich allegorical mode of representation and its engagement with Boethian dialectics and philosophical psychology, provides a more powerful analysis of this form of eroticism than we have so far been willing to attribute to medieval culture. I hardly think the *Rose* was alone in this. But I restrict this chapter to a single text because I agree with Lewis that, partly because of our historical distance from allegory, it remains a difficult mode of representation to read; and the effort of historical imagination required here demands the kind of sustained close reading the *Rose* consistently rewards. I focus so tightly on the Rose also because it is the text other than the *Consolation* with which Chaucer maintained his most persistent intellectual dialogue, and with its explicit commitment to adapting Boethian dialectic to something like a character-based poetics it offers both Chaucer’s closest model for philosophical poetry and a helpfully proximate contrast with his mature poetics.” Mark Miller, *Philosophical Chaucer*, 156.
confront an originary imago of himself at a critical stage in the development of his desire
and, likewise, the development of his sense of autonomy.

The *Rose* reaches a heightened poetic pitch approximately one third of the way
through Guillaume de Lorris's passage. Our narrator moves geographically from a
normative springtime dreamscape to an enclosed garden; the allegorical figure Idleness
shows him the way and highlights the wall, encircled by trees. Our narrator enters the
garden without apparent difficulty and experiences it as the walled enclosure has already
coded it: "the earthly paradise."\(^{63}\)

Indeed, the narrator seems unable to understand or interpret the garden's
liminality; he knows that he is in a garden, and that it is "earthly," but also feels that the
garden's delights are so manifold that it should rightly "belong to the world of the spirit."\(^{64}\)
The specific article indicates that one singular earthly paradise is being described, and the
paradise's placement, one foot in the realm of nature and the other in the realm of the
spirit, recalls Augustine's two-part conception of Eden: Some interpret it "in an exclusively
corporeal sense," others give it "an exclusively spiritual meaning," and still others take it in
both senses, "sometimes corporeally and at other times spiritually." He states his own
position at the outset: "I admit that the third interpretation appeals to me."\(^{65}\)

Aquinas also asks, "Is paradise a corporeal place?" Scholastics diverge from the
Augustinian Edenic tradition in notable ways, and Aquinas asserts the necessity of belief in
the physical and factual nature of Eden for any spiritual extrapolation:

\(^{63}\) *Paradis terrestre* (652).
\(^{64}\) *Tant estoit li leu delitables, Qu'il sembloit estre esperitables* (653-654).
Whatever Scripture tells us about paradise is set down as a matter of history; and wherever Scripture makes use of this method, we must hold to the historical truth of the narrative as a foundation of whatever spiritual explanations we may offer.\textsuperscript{66}

Aquinas’s literal understanding of Eden was taken as inherent to the spiritual postulations and interpretations of the scene; such interpretations would not hold, were they not based on the fact of Eden having existed and existing still. Indeed, as Aquinas notes, “paradise did not become useless through being unoccupied by man after sin.”\textsuperscript{67}

Eden therefore occupies a space, for the theologian as for the vernacular poet, which exists in an imagined past and can be revisited and employed or “used” for the benefit of the person living in his or her historical present.

Guillaume de Lorris takes up the train of thought by which an Edenic space is conditioned by its liminality, by the simultaneity of its earthliness and its spirituality, and casts that Eden instead in the Lover’s dream vision. Guillaume’s treatment also rests upon Aquinas’s articulation of an Eden which remains, and remains useful and useable. I wish first to examine the specifically romance-coded Edenic qualities of this particular dream garden, and then to investigate the psychic possibilities it holds for the Lover.

Let us return to Diversion’s wall, which circles the garden and which, like the wall in the Joie de la Cort episode, is guarded by gruesome figures. Here, however, instead of staked heads, the garden is ringed by dark and fearful representations of human affect, emotion, and action. These figures are, in order, Hatred, Felony, Covetousness, Avarice, Envy, Sorrow, Old Age, Pope-Holiness, and Poverty. Idleness explains the distressing wall to the narrator in rather coded language: “… on the outside he arranged to have portrayed the


\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}
images that are painted there. They are neither elegant nor delightful, but, as you saw just now, sad and mournful. Many times Diversion and those who follow him, and who live in joy and comfort, come to this place to have a good time in the cool shade.”68 That is, the wall is something that Diversion himself has had constructed in order to divide a space of relaxation, happiness, contentment, and pleasure, away from the pressures of worldly misbehavior, ill-will, and circumstance. The garden, then, is initially constituted by that which it excludes; the garden that Diversion makes is conditionally constructed by refusing entry to such problematic emotions and experiences as those articulated by the allegorical figures who circle it. Their dangerous proximity to the garden, however, places the garden in a dialectical relationship with the very entities that Diversion seeks to eradicate from his pleasure-garden.

The dramatic enclosure that Diversion creates and Idleness describes serves as a primary indication that the garden here has an Edenic valence. Not only does the enclosure, partially camouflaged by trees, but intensified by its demonic guardians, conform to the romance standard for the Edenic representation, it also serves to exclude those human qualities which we might reasonably attribute to the fall. Old Age, of course, is of primary importance here; its exclusion indicates that the garden functions as a kind of Neverland where no one need grow up. More to the point, it indicates that this garden allows for the possibility of immortality, as of course did the Eden garden until the fall. Poverty, Avarice, Envy, Felony, and Covetousness all rely on the existence and manipulatio of material goods,

or at least the potential of lack, which the Eden garden did not sustain. Pope-Holiness may be said to be the emotional equivalent of Avarice or Felony; it relies on malicious intent and a capacity for schadenfreude which the exclusion of Hatred and Sorrow precludes. Ultimately, these final two emotions, though the most visceral and thereby the most apparently natural, can have no place in a purely Edenic space either; until the fall, there is no cause for either, no prompting event.

So much for the garden's enclosure. What does the interior of the garden look like? The Lover's dreamscape provides a useful foil for the garden; when the Lover first drifts off to sleep, he finds himself to be in a pleasing Mayday scene, wherein the trees and bushes are newly adorning themselves with leaves, and the birds become lively once more. This is a ubiquitous sort of description, to be found in manifold love lyrics and romances, comparing the spring season to a lover's amorous nature and, perhaps, using it to highlight his lovelorn state. The garden, however, is a different space altogether. First of all, it is

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69 I will discuss the Wycliffite theorization of Eden as entirely removed from the sphere of commerce in the fourth chapter of this work.

70 Avis m’iere qu’il estoit mains, Il a já bien cinq ans, au mains, En mai estoie, ce songoie, El temps amoreus plain de joie, Él tens où tote riens s’esgaie, Que l’en ne voit boisson ne haie Qui en mai parer ne se voile, Ét covrir de novele folle; Li bois recovrent lor verdure, 55 Qui sunt sec tant cum yver dure, La terre mêmes s’orgoille Por la rousée qui la moille, Ét oblie la poverté Où ele a tot l’yer esté. Lors devient la terre si gobe, Qu’el volt avoir novele robe; Si scet si cointe robe faire, Que de colors i a cent paire, D’erbes, de flors indes et perses, Ét de maintes colors diverses. C’est la robe que je devise, Por quoi la terre miex se prise. Li oisel qui se sunt téu, Tant cum il ont le fruit éu, Et le tens divers et frarin, Sun en mai por le tens serin, Si lié qu’il monstrrent en chantant Qu’en lor cuer a de joie tant, Qu’il lor estuet chanter par force. Li rossignos lores s’efforce De chanter et de faire noise; Lors s’esvertue, et lors s’envoise Li papegaus et la kalandre: Lors estuet jones gens entendre A estre gais et amoreus Por le tens bel et doucereus (55-85).
cultivated by the allegorical figures who reside therein, and was designed and built by Diversion. Like the monastic garden, it is inscribed in an architectural plan: “Li vergiers par compasséure/ Si fu de droite quarréure, S’ot de lonc autant cum de large” (1328-1330). Moreover, the natural world of this garden is not the normative springtime of the first dreamscape, but instead contains a dizzying variety of all known plants and flowers:

Nus arbres qui soit qui fruit charge, Se n’est aucuns arbres hideus, Dont il n’i ait ou ung, ou deus Où vergier, ou plus, s’il avient. Pomiers i ot, bien m’en sovient, Qui chargoient pomes grenades, C’est uns fruis mout bon à malades; De noiers i ot grant foison, Qui chargoient en la saison Itef fruit cum sunt nois mugades, Qui ne sunt ameres, ne fades; Alemandiers y ot planté, Et si ot où vergier planté Maint figuel, et maint biau datier; Si trovast qu’en éust mestier, Où vergier mainte bone espice, Cloz de girofle et requelice, Graine de paradis novele, Citoal, anis, et canelé, Et mainte espice délibable, Que bon mengier fait après table (1374-1394).

The priggish exclusion of “arbres hideus,” as well as the emphasis on apple trees which bizarrely produce pomegranates both highlight the potential taboo of the forbidden tree; both apples and pomegranates were posited as the forbidden fruit, and the pomegranate has the additional valence of being the fruit Persephone consumed, which banished her for at least half the year to the Underworld. Here, however, any trees that might be unsightly, or whose unsightliness might demonstrate their unwholesomeness, are banished from the garden, and the apple-pomegranates are described as available for consumption and even curative. This garden, then, seems to be one that embodies all of the plenty of the garden of Eden, but which has removed the recognizable taboo from it. This garden also contains

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71 “a completely straight, regular square, as long as it was wide.” Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, trans. Charles Dahlberg, 48.
72 “Except for some trees which would have been too ugly, there was no tree which might bear fruit of which there were not one or two, or perhaps more, in the garden. There were apple trees, I remember well, that bore pomegranates, an excellent food for the sick. There was a great abundance of nut trees that in their season bore such fruit as nutmegs, which are neither bitter nor insipid. There were almond trees, and many fig and date trees were planted in the garden. He who needed to could find many a good spice there, cloves, licorice, fresh grains of paradise, zedoary, anise, cinnamon, and many a delightful spice good to eat after meals.” Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, trans. Charles Dahlberg, 48.
domestic trees, herbs and spices, as well as excellent game, “fallow-deer and roe deer,” rabbits, and other small animals. This garden, like the pucele’s, is fitted out with everything necessary to promoting human life with ease.

Unsurprisingly, this garden also appeals to the five senses. The Lover’s first impression upon entry is the angelic bird songs, which seem to him to be otherworldly, and more beautiful than any sounds he has heard before (661). The garden also features rushing winds and the gurgle of pleasantly laid-out streams (1385). As we have already heard, the air is scented with a variety of spices, and is further flavored by flowers “of various colors and sweetest perfumes.”73 The abundance of fruits and other delicacies entices the palate, and the variety of soft shaded banks and groves, as well as the tactile pleasures of the fruits and flower must suggest pleasing touch.

As in Erec and Enide, this garden incorporates a mixture of potential for diversion and contemplation, and also the necessity for some kind of maintenance or labor. Idleness is the Lover’s guide, and it is she who opens the garden’s gate for the Lover; a lack of purpose and an indulgent engagement in relaxation therefore may be taken to be prerequisites for entry into this garden and primary constituents of time spent within its walls. Once inside the garden, the Lover observes such pleasing figures as Joy, Courtesy, Openness, Beauty, Simplicity, Wealth, and Generosity joining Diversion in various dances and games. Monastic contemplation these diversions are not, but they do indicate the garden’s pleasing potential for peaceful enjoyment.

Once the Lover has been struck by the God of Love’s arrow, however, he is indoctrinated into the service of the God of Love. This service, though pleasurable in some

ways, is certainly laborious, and requires an attentive cultivation of the Lover's person, of his behaviors, and of his actions towards others. The so-called "sickness of love" also demands the Lover's submission to various painful physical symptoms like sleeplessness and stomach cramps (65-66). Indeed, the Lover characterizes his labor in feudal and militaristic terms: "I do not fear your service in any way, but because a sergeant exerts himself in vain to perform worthy service if it does not please the lord for whom he does it." The garden, therefore, conforms to the romance model of an Edenic space in its simultaneous status as a pleasure garden for relaxation and its requirements of labor.

According to my earlier argument, a romance that constructs an Edenic space does so in order to enable a psychic return to an origin for its protagonist. Oddly, our Lover enters his Edenic garden at the beginning of the narrative, so the return cannot function here, as it did in *Erec and Enide*, as a straightforward return to the beginning of his narrative. Instead, this garden allows a more universal subject to revisit a more ubiquitous form of psychological origin, providing a model for the functioning of desire and its constitutive effects on the individual in the *Rose* and in those works which are heartily influenced by its poetic tradition.

The Lover, we are told, is in his "twentieth year," a time when his tribute to the powers of Love are required. Though contemporary scholarship gives diverging accounts of medieval childhood and adolescence, the conception that childhood did not exist until the early modern period has largely been discarded. A medieval childhood may have looked different from a modern childhood, but nevertheless we may understand the

74 Nel' di pas por recréantise, Car point ne dout vostre servise; Mès serjant en vain se travaille De faire servise qui vaille, Quand li servises n'atalente A celui cui l'en le présente (2099-2104).
Romance of the Rose to espouse the belief that the Lover has passed through his boyhood years and now emerges into his twenties with his libido and his romantic sensibilities having matured and ready to be tried.

The poet enters the garden and first functions simply as a mute and passive observer, noting the pleasing aspect of this paradisal space, as well as the joyous pastimes of his allegorical companions. He acts for the first time immediately after the primary comprehensive description of the garden, when he spies Narcissus’s pool, marked such by an appropriately descriptive commemorative plaque. The Lover tells the well-known story of Narcissus; casting the Ovidian tale in courtly terms. Echo here is a “great lady” and “loyal lover” Narcissus a “young man” of “great beauty” who is too prideful to interest himself in Echo. These descriptors cause the reader to imagine the story of Narcissus as a medieval romance, in which a worthy maiden is ill-used by her knightly love interest. Such anachronistic re-castings of Ovidian tales are not uncommon in the romance tradition; we may think, for instance, of the Middle English Sir Orfeo. The tale reaches a strange moment, however, when the knightly Narcissus bends down to this fountain to drink:

Sus la fontaine, tout adens Se mist lors por boivre dedans. Si vit en l'iaue clere et nete Son vis, son nés et sa bouchete, Et cis maintenant s'esbah; Car ses umbres l'ot si trahi, Que cuida véoir la figure 1547 D'ung enfant bel à desmesure. Lors se sot bien Amors vengier Du grant orguel et du dangier Que Narcisus li ot mené. Lors li fu bien guerredoné, Qu'il musa tant à la fontaine, Qu'il ama son umbre demaine, Si en fu mors à la parclose (1541-1555).  

Though close to its Ovidian roots, this passage rings uncomfortably against the courtly background that de Lorris has created for it. Narcissus, who to this point has been

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75 Lying flat on his stomach over the fountain, he began to drink from it and saw his face, his nose and mouth, clear and sharp. Then he was struck with wonder, for these shadows so deceived him that he saw the face of a child beautiful beyond measure. Then Love knew how to avenge himself for the great pride and the resistance that Narcissus had directed toward him. And Narcissus was well repaid: he mused so long at the fountain that he fell in love with his own reflection and died of his love in the end. Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, trans. Charles Dahlberg, 50.
described as a mature knight, sees in the fountain not an accurate reflection of his own face, but rather “the face of a child beautiful beyond measure.” The fountain, then, seems not to reflect the outside world as it appears to the naked eye, but rather to strip it and to reveal, in a mirrored gestalt, that figure’s origin. For Narcissus, the subject of this tale, this origin is childhood, specifically *his* childhood.

For Narcissus, then, the fountain allows not for a passive observation of a past figure by his present, but rather for a complex dialectic between the mature Narcissus and the image in the fountain. Harold Bloom has famously stated that Oedipus is the only man who could not have an Oedipal complex, because he actually lived out those forbidden desires that prey upon and mold future figures like Hamlet. Similarly, the Narcissus of de Lorris’s description actively performs a Narcissism unavailable to anyone else. Narcissus sees in the pool the face of his youth and in his love of that image, he enacts the very constituent of the preoedipal grandiose self. That is, for Narcissus, as for various psychoanalytic critics of Augustine, the “grandiose self” and the “idealized parent imago” are not synthesized into an appropriate mechanism of desire that can foster sustainable desiring paradigms to be replicated onto potential romantic interests. 76 Instead, Narcissus is “stuck,” as it were, in

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76 Both Capps and Beers, for example, utilize Heinz Kohut’s self psychology in elaborating on the preoedipal basis of Augustine’s vision of ascent at Ostia. For Capps, Augustine never has approval from Monica for acts of independence. In other words, an affirming self-object response of the mother to the child’s thrusts toward independence, crucial to resolving the dependency of the preoedipal stage of development, never occurred in Augustine’s case. The fusion detected in the Ostia vision is interlocked with the developmental fact that Augustine was never given that empathic response from Monica that would have allowed him to feel good about acts of independence. For Beers, Augustine’s archaic narcissistic structures (the “grandiose self” and “idealized parent imago”) were never integrated in a phase-appropriate developmental manner. The Ostia vision, according to Beers, reflects this developmental theme:

*Augustine soared to his longed for idealized Mother imago ... The fact that the mystical area is beyond language (i.e. silent) suggest the pre-structural, pre-symbolic, and pre-linguistic realm of dedifferentiated narcissism. And, the reference to carnal pleasure suggests a degree of “telescoping” of narcissistic form and energies onto later oedipal themes.*
admiring the idealized image of his own childish face. He cannot love Echo or anyone else, because the Lacanian paradigm of maturity by which the subject confronts an image and, feeling his own insufficiency and awkwardness in the face of that imaged Other constructs systems of desire, short-circuits here. Narcissus is actually pleased by what he sees in the fountain; he sees a self that is complete, that is expansive in its own autonomy and glorious in its own hermetically sealed beauty. His satisfaction, in its first moments enjoyable, becomes a curse; it prevents Narcissus from engaging with the world around him and ultimately causes his permanent removal from that world.

The Narcissus moment has recently received much critical attention which frames it in terms of its potential for perversity. As Mark Miller notes, “Much critical discussion ... has understood the narcissism in the Rose as an avoidable pathology.” Much of this reading hinges on the fact that most commentators, whether explicitly or implicitly, have read the Narcissus tale in terms of its classical origins, in which the Narcissus figure is cast in no uncertain terms as a cautionary figure. This is an invaluable and extremely productive lens by which to understand the treatment of this moment in de Lorris as specifically instructive; much of the Ovidian corpus is understood in the Middle Ages as comportment advice and affective training, and the Narcissus moment here conforms to that method of reading in some respects. Indeed, the Lover encounters the pool of Narcissus and recounts the tale immediately before embarking upon the God of Love’s rigorous program of self-

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improvement; Ovid may be seen to function here as a guide, like Dante’s Virgil back from Limbo to shepherd the Lover safely through the perversion of self-love.

Psychoanalytic readers Huchet, Hult and Miller are interested instead in the nuanced readings that frame the Narcissus moment as a pathology much more integrated into normative subject formation and behavior than this classical trajectory would have us believe. Missing from these discussions, however, has been the centrality of an Edenic understanding of the garden which frames the Narcissus moment, and the way in which this Edenic habitat requires a specific kind of psychoanalytic interpretation of Narcissus, and also of the Lover’s strange response to Narcissus’s story. Not only does the specific kind of narcissism that this moment articulates function as a kind of recognizable element of subject formation and of that subject’s struggles with achieving (or imagining achieving) autonomy, it in fact can only do so by means of a return to the origins of desire which the Eden garden makes possible.

Miller’s nuanced reading, while it elucidates much of the subtlety of de Lorris’s courtly poetics, elides the *locus amoenus* that the Lover first inhabits during his dream vision with the walled garden that the Lover enters with the help of his guide Idleness. Miller therefore reads the Narcissus moment as embodying the Lover’s normative dilemma when presented with a springtime scene that shows animals coupling with naturalistic abandon and that thereby intensifies the dream narrator’s loneliness in his own solitary predicament. By Miller’s reading, Narcissus is similarly caught up in the courtly catch-twenty-two by which he desires and in his longing seals himself from ever interacting with an other: “Narcissism becomes Guillaume’s term for an eroticism structured by these two interpenetrating longings, for a perfect possession of the erotic object and for an object
necessarily removed from any contact with the desiring subject." Miller is not wrong; the simultaneity of Narcissus’s self-longing and the despair and ultimate demise it brings him do indeed mirror the conventional courtly lover’s plight in his all-consuming passion for his lady, and his equally debilitating conviction of his own inferiority in the face of his lady’s abiding perfection. But, in fusing the classically inflected *locus amoenus* with the enclosed garden, we pass over a crucial reframing of the narrator’s subjective state as one that evokes an origin that has passed but which is still available for use. As indeed I demonstrate in the above reading, the Narcissus moment is irrevocably cast in an Eden very different from the classical springtime scene; therefore, the kind of desire that Narcissus engages in, and that Miller so rightly demonstrates informs the poem’s conceptions of subject formation and the subject’s struggles with autonomy, is a desire for an origin that allows for a much more productive and more powerful imagining of coherent selfhood.

Let us now turn to the narrator’s “reading” of the Narcissus fountain to examine how his interactions with the fountain function with regard to normative courtly love and also a psychic engagement with origin. Oddly, when the Lover looks into the fountain, he does not see his own face reflected, but rather “two crystal stones” which catch his eye:

Où fons de la fontaine aval, Avoit deux pierres de cristal Qu'à grande entente remirai, Et une chose vous dirai, Qu'à merveilles, ce cuit, tenrés Tout maintenant que vous l'orrés. Quant li solaus qui tout aguete, Ses rais en la fontaine giete, Et la clartés aval descent, Lors perent colors plus de cent Où cristal, qui por le soleil Devient ynde, jaune et vermeil: Si ot le cristal merveilleus Ite! force que tous li leus, Arbres et flors et quanqu'aorne Li vergiers, i pert tout aorne, Et por faire la chose entendre, Un essample vous veil aprendre. Ainsinc cum li miréors montre. Les choses qui li sunt encontre, Et y voit-’en sans coverture Et lor color, et lor figure; Tretout ausinc vous dis por voir, Que li cristal, sans décevoir, Tout l'estre du vergier accusent A ceux qui dedens l'iaue musent: Car tous jours quelque part qu'il soient, L'une moitié du vergier voient; Et s'il se tornent maintenant, Pueent véoir le

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77 Mark Miller, *Philosophical Chaucer*, 167.
Like the *Joie de la Cort* episode in *Erec and Enide*, this description of the fountain and especially of the mystical seeing stones at its bottom seems unnecessary, unmotivated, and is also wholly divided from the Ovidian Narcissus narrative. Aside from gently priming the reader for the appearance of Cupid, the God of Love, this strange and captivating aspect of the fountain does not seem to provide the poem much in the way of corrective character training, or even of conscious constructions of courtly desire. The Lover does not see his own face and become captivated by his own beauty; he seems, then, not to need, or already to have absorbed, any didactic warnings against succumbing to self-love. Nor, it seems, does the Lover become entranced by an image that he desires and that therefore precludes him from achieving the object of his desire, even as he longs for that very object. The Lover is indeed deeply engaged in the vision that the fountain affords him, but seemingly not because it affords him, like Narcissus, an image so perfect that he is rendered static and mute in his paralyzing longing for it. Indeed, this seems like a more experimentalist or even scientific moment; the Lover is captivated instead by the panoramic view of the garden that the crystals afford him.

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78 There is one thing I want to tell you which, I think, you will consider a marvel when you hear it: when the sun, that sees all, throws its rays into the fountain and when its light descends to the bottom, then more than a hundred colors appear in the crystal which, on account of the sun, become yellow, blue, and red. The crystals are so wonderful and have such power that the entire place—trees, flowers, and whatever adorns the garden—appears there all in order. To help you understand, I will give you an example. Just as the mirror shows things that are in front of it, without cover, in their true colors and shapes, just so, I tell you truly, do the crystals reveal the whole condition of the garden, without deception, to those who gaze into the water, for always, wherever they are, they see one half of the garden, and if they turn, then they may see the rest. There is nothing so small, however hidden or shut up, that is not shown there in the crystal, as if it were painted in detail. Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg, 53.
My reading of the garden as an Edenic space offers a specific solution to the problem of what the Lover observes in the fountain’s crystals and why they prompt in him and in all others who look into them “the simple will to love.” Indeed, the Lover says that no person, no matter how wise or how learned, can look into these crystals without being placed directly onto the “road to love.” He claims that the through the powers of this fountain, “a new madness comes upon men: Here hearts are changed; intelligence and moderation have no business here...For it is here that Cupid, son of Venus, sowed the seed of love that has dyed the whole fountain.” Why should crystals that seem only to demonstrate to the viewer, in minute detail, the extent of the garden, provoke such a response? Or rather, why should the view of the garden be correlated, by whatever magical means the God of Love employs, with the overwhelming desire to love? It is in viewing the perfect reflection of the entire garden that the Lover fixes first on the rose bushes, then on the roses, and finally on his particular love object, the rosebud. So, what exactly is this image of the garden, and why should it hold the power to transform any subject into a Lover?

The Lover is actually much less like the classical Narcissis in this moment, than like Chaucer’s Platonic Orpheus, reimagined as a seeker of truth, he “þat may seen þe clere welle of good.” The Lover looks into the fountain and, rather than seeing his singular visage floating before his eyes, he sees the composite garden, with all of its manifold elements, among which hides the rose. I claim that, in psychoanalytic fashion, the Lover beholds not the simplistic object of his desire, but rather the very origin of his own

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79 Ci sourt as gens novele rage, Ici se changent li corage; Ci n’a mestier, sens, ne mesure, Ci est d’amer volenté pure; Ci ne se set conseiller nus, Car Cupido li fils Venus, Sema ici d’Amors la graine 1649 Qui toute a çainte la fontaine (1643-1650). Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg, 53.

80Chaucer’s *Boece*, 3023. Of course, Orpheus fails in this endeavor.
personal and psychological mechanisms of desire. They are coded in the quintessential image of origin: the Eden garden. Like Nabokov's Humbert Humbert (or, as Freud would have it, like any of us) the Lover locates his sexual object in the primal and primary scene of origin.

The garden, constructed to explicitly evoke Eden, allows the subject within its bounds an access to origin. As we have seen, romances allow for a return to narrative origin, as in Erec and Enide, and psychological origin, as in de Lorris’s retelling of the Narcissus tale. The Lover, here, actually views a theological or even historical space of origins, and is able to imagine himself therein, an idea which is so seductive he is roused from his abject state only by the appeal of an object that absorbs all of his amorous affect. In gazing into the crystals, the Lover sees a perfect Eden garden, which he recognizes (consciously or subconsciously) as an originary paradise. This paradise functions as a subjective mirror; it enables Narcissus to see his childhood visage and therefore enables him to perform his paralytic engagement with his own grandiose sense of self. As Miller demonstrates, however, the courtly lover must instead become caught up in a sense of his own inferiority in order properly to embody the divide between a longing to achieve the object and an inability to do so. This figure, instead of seeing his own face, sees the Eden garden and locates the origin of desire therein. Eden therefore functions in the Rose, as in other romances, and, as I shall demonstrate next, in Chaucer’s poetics, as the locus of primary love and the locus also of the love object.
Cultivating Continuity: The Edenic Dialectic in Augustine and The Miller’s Tale

In the previous chapter, we see a quintessential lover, a subject or self, looking into a pool where Narcissus saw his own visage and experienced an auto-erotic pull so strong that he could not tear himself away. The lover, however, looks in and sees an origin space, a garden, reflected back at him. Rather than demonstrating his ability to conquer his own auto-erotic desires, this origin garden shows the lover that a glance the self is essentially the origin of desire. As Freud puts it in his short essay On Narcissism, “The sexual instincts are at the outset attached to the satisfaction of the ego-instincts; only later do they become independent of these, and even then we have an indication of that original attachment in the fact that the persons who are concerned with the child’s feeing, care, and protection become his earliest sexual objects.”81 That is, any subject takes the first short jump from macerating in ego-centered eros, and instead focusing that erotic energy on a primary caretaker.

Psychoanalysts who take up medieval texts and medievalists who perform psychoanalytic readings locate an analogue to the kinds of narcissistic mirrorings that I locate in the French romance tradition in the life writings of Saint Augustine. Particularly relevant to such readings are Augustine’s primary moment of conversion to Catholicism which takes place within a walled garden in Milan and Augustine’s vision of Monica’s ascent at Ostia. The two moments have been read by Capps, Dittes, Beers, Parsons, and Rigby, among others, as demonstrating Augustine’s undeveloped sense of autonomy due to

his persistent pre-oedipal attachment to his mother.\textsuperscript{82} Indeed, as Beers writes of the vision at Ostia: “Augustine soared to his longed for idealized Mother imago ... The fact that the mystical area is beyond language (i.e. silent) suggest the pre-structural, pre-symbolic, and pre-linguistic realm of dedifferentiated narcissism. And, the reference to carnal pleasure suggests a degree of “telescoping” of narcissistic form and energies onto later oedipal themes.”\textsuperscript{83} Monica is indeed present for both; her presence legitimizes any conversion experiences her son undergoes, and also allows him (and his readers) to conflate a return to Catholicism with a return to the maternal womb. Not only is Monica consitutively present, her spiritual guidance and almost fantastical proximity to the divine allows the young Augustine to conflate his mother with an originary pace from which a kind of unmediated and pure communion with God emanates.

It is suggestive for my purposes that these two moments of spiritual clarity in Augustine’s \textit{Confessions}, which also simultaneously demonstrate the “archaic narcissistic structures” that fit Augustine’s belief systems squarely within his powerful union with Monica, employ Edenic gardens as the impetus for a conversion moment. In Milan, the enclosed garden that is part of Augustine’s lodging is a place where he can be at once in the company of friends and yet entirely solitary in his contemplation and transformation; similarly, at Ostia, on the day of Monica’s death, Augustine recounts that he and Monica “ad


quandam fenestram unde hortus intra domum quae nos habebat prospectabatur.” In each of the two heightened moments, the enclosed garden proves an ideal setting for a transformative spiritual experience; Augustine melds contemplation with action to construct for himself a powerful engagement with and deepening of his own systems of belief. The Eden garden functions in Augustine’s writings, as in the French romance tradition, as an originary space through which Augustine can access his primary Catholic self, a self wholly bound up in his union with his mother. After all, Monica guided Augustine’s religious self from infancy; every conversion moment is therefore a return, a re-articulation or cyclical revisiting of a Catholic self that has always already been.

It might appear strange, then, that even in these highly charged and seemingly preordained moments, Augustine struggles deeply with the functioning of his will (voluntas). Augustine’s prose is rendered nearly nonsensical as he approaches the conversion moment in the Milanese garden; his questioning takes on a manic tone as he presses himself to understand how he is as yet unable to desire a complete subjugation to God:

unde hoc monstrum? et quare istuc? luceat misericordia tua, et interrogem, si forte mihi respondere possint latebrae poenarum hominum et tenebrosissimae contritiones filiorum Adam. unde hoc monstrum? et quare istuc? imperat animus corpori, et pareatur statim; imperat animus sibi, et resistitur. imperat animus ut moveatur manus, et tanta est facilitas ut vix a servitio discernatur imperium: et animus animus est, manus autem corpus est. imperat animus ut velit animus, nec alter est nec facit tamen. unde hoc monstrum? et quare istuc, inquam, ut velit qui non imperaret nisi vellet, et non facit quod imperat? sed non ex toto vult: non ergo ex toto imperat. nam in tantum imperat, in quantum vult, et in tantum non fit quod imperat, in quantum non vult, quoniam voluntas imperat ut sit voluntas, nec alia, sed ipsa. non itaque plena imperat; ideo non est quod imperat. nam si plena esset, nec imperaret ut esset, quia iam esset. non igitur monstrum partim vellet, partim nolle, sed aegritudo animi est, quia non totus adsurgit veritate consuetudine praegravatus, et ideo sunt duae voluntates, quia una earum tota non est et hoc adest alteri quod deest alteri (8.9.21).

84 were standing leaning out of a window overlooking a garden. 9.10.23 (173)
85 I am indebted to Steven Kruger for this important insight.
86 What is the cause of this monstrous situation? Why is it the case? May your mercy illuminate me as I ask if perhaps an answer can be found in the hidden punishments and secret tribulations that befall the sons of Adam? What causes this monstrous fact? and why is it so? The mind commands the body and is instantly obeyed. The mind commands itself and meets resistance. The mind commands the hand to move, and it is so
Augustine describes the fragmentation of the human creature, tellingly referred to her as “filiorum Adam,” divided by two wills (voluntates), each of which is incomplete in itself, and each of which contains that which the other lacks. By this divide, the human creature is therefore condemned to a state of constitutive longing by which opposing forces of desire bring about the conscious subject. The Augustine of the Confessions suffers a multitude of these moments of fragmentation when he is simultaneously pulled by two conflicting desires: he loves classical rhetoric but deems it coercive; is enthralled by Manichean theology but is also pulled by Monica’s Catholicism; loves sex but regards chastity as the higher good; loves his mistress and children but finds them to be incompatible with his Catholic identity; grieves over death but finds grief to be a selfish and masturbatory emotion.

It is easy to code Augustine’s battles of the will as the forces of the spiritual opposing the forces of the carnal. Indeed, Augustine often does so himself: he says of studying Cicero: “quomodo ardebam, deus meus, quomodo ardebam revolare a terrenis ad te (3.4.8);”87 of the Manicheans he claims that he consumed their teachings “non avide easy that one hardly distinguishes the order from its execution. Yet mind is mind, and hand is body. The mind orders the mind to will. The recipient of the order is itself, yet it does not perform it. What causes this monstrosity and why does this happen? Mind commands, I say, that it should will, and would not give the command it it did not will, yet does not perform what it commands. The willing is not wholehearted, so the command is not wholehearted. The strength of the command lies in the strength of will, and the degree to which the command is not performed lies in the degree to which the will is not engaged. For it is the will that commands the will to exist, and it commands not another will but itself. So the will that commands is incomplete, and therefore what it commands does not happen. If it were complete, it would not need to command the will to exist, since it would exist already. Therefore there is no monstrous split between willing and not willing. We are dealing with a morbid condition of the mind which, when it is lifted up by the truth, does not unreservedly rise to it but is weighed down by habit. So there are two wills. Neither of them is complete, and what is present in the one is lacking in the other. This translation, as all others from the Confessions, is taken from Henry Chadwick’s edition for Oxford. Saint Augustine, Confessions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991): 147-148. Hereafter, the translations will be cited parenthetically with their page numbers from this text.

87 My God, how I burned, how I burned with longing to leave earthly things and fly back to you (39).
quidem, quia nec sapiebas in ore meo sicuti es “(3.6.10);88 and of course he issued the now famous statement with regard to sex: “a mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo (8.7.17).”89 In each of these statements, Augustine deplores what seems to be a physical weakness in favor of some other better allegiance to God.

Earlier commentators like Pierre Bayle and William Connolly as well as contemporary philosophers like Martha Nussbaum take up the obsession with a punitive body-soul divide inherent the above statements and read Augustine as fraught with a dualism not unlike that of the Neo-Platonists he disparaged, and by which the corporeal or carnal is always a troublesome nuisance compromising the superior efforts of the soul. While medievalists tend to take a more tempered view of Augustinian dualism, contemporary high philosophy reads Augustine as caught up in an irremediable battle between his flesh and his metaphysical self. Nussbaum uses such a Neo-Platonic reading of Augustine in order to flesh out her sense of Augustine’s inability to live autonomously. She suggests that Augustine throws up his hands in the face of his warring body and spirit, and chooses resigned inaction over an attempt to live a good life despite, or even by means of, his divided self. Nussbaum locates Augustine’s robust conception of shame as integral to his inability to make sense of his warring self:

Thinking Augustinian thoughts of radical evil mitigates the suffering of having to obey evil powers in the world. It supplies the powerless with a project- coming to God’s presence that does not rely on their ability to will good action here and now. But again: the price that is paid is too high. The price is a profound shame- if not at all uncontrol, as with the Platonists, still, at a very fundamental element of our humanity- our independence, our willfulness, our sexual and moral unpredictability. Instead of taking action as best we can, we had better cover ourselves, mourn, and wait.90

88 Not indeed with much of an appetite, for the taste in my mouth was not that of yourself (41).
89 Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet (145).
Nussbaum’s disparaging attitude towards Augustine’s presumed inactivity is practically Pelagian; such complaints with regard to the limitations Augustine imagines curtail free will are by no means new, nor, as we see, are they unfounded. Nussbaum suggests that the problem of conflicting bodily and spiritual desires that haunts even Augustine’s most transformative moments ultimately renders him, and therefore his conception of the human creature, lacking in autonomy. The pull of the body and of appetites and persuasions associated with the carnal can never be wholly reconciled with the pull of the spiritual and those desires and pursuits not for oneself but for God. Since this tension is ultimately unresolvable, the righteous man’s best option is to live as quietly as possible and avoid action.

Nussbaum’s points are well-taken and, as we have seen, may be upheld easily by the well-known moments in the *Confessions* where the carnal will and the spiritual will are at war, and where an exhausted and depressive Augustine seeks an escape from choice as the only possible good. But, her point does rely rather heavily on the dualism inherent in her position; Nussbaum’s “shame” emerges due to the conflicts between body and spirit that render humans sexually and morally unpredictable. Let us return to Augustine’s speech in the Milanese garden to assess whether a dualistic division between body and spirit does indeed underwrite the fragmentation of the two wills.

In the above passage, Augustine draws a comparison between the functioning of the body and the analogous function of the mind. In what he describes as a “monstrous” (monstrum) situation, Augustine sees the body as much more docile and willing to obey than the human’s rational and spiritual properties: “imperat animus corpori, et paretur statim; imperat animus sibi, et resistitur. imperat animus ut moveatur manus, et tanta est
facilitas ut vix a servitio discernatur imperium: et animus animus est, manus autem corpus est. imperat animus ut velit animus, nec alter est nec facit tamen. unde hoc monstrum?"91

(8.9.21). Augustine claims that when the animus commands the body, the body obeys immediately; when the animus commands itself, it meets with resistance. This observation is intuitive: it is easy to desire, for instance, to put on one’s shoes, and to obey that desire. Often, these kinds of everyday physical activities take place almost without a conscious exchange between the commanding property and its obeying legion. When we have a cup of coffee in front of us, for instance, we often pick it up and sip it without being aware of the desire to do so. If we stop and think about it, however, it becomes clear that the gesture is indeed orderly and does conform to the desires of the undercaffinated mind and the rational desires to accomplish mental tasks for which the drinking of coffee is required. In these instances, the body enjoys what may be experienced as a seamless integration of rational will and physical response.

By contrast, Augustine tells us that the animus meets with resistance when it commands itself. Animus is notoriously difficult to translate; Chadwick renders it “mind” as we see in my footnotes. I leave the term in Latin, however, in order to remind the reader that animus retains the sense not only of mental or even intellectual faculty, but also of emotional and spiritual capacity. We may then understand animus to signal something like the rational soul; it is a thinking, feeling entity distinct from the body but interacting with it and sometimes on behalf of it. What, then, are the kinds of tasks or wishes that an animus
would command of itself, and would find itself unwilling to perform? In the sense of the mind, we might imagine this action to be psychological. The \textit{animus} commands itself to think through a difficult problem, for instance, and instead of setting to its task, it invents distractions or constructs roadblocks to its own thought processes. How often, for instance, might we sit down intent on understanding why we have had an argument with a friend or lover, and instead of sorting out the situation for ourselves and coming to a better understanding of our own motivations and the motivations of the other, we feel ourselves more confused than before, and quickly locate some other task to take our minds off the upsetting situation. For Augustine, of course, the problem is compounded by the \textit{animus}'s spiritual component: the \textit{animus} here commands itself to believe, to trust, to have faith in God and take comfort in religion, and the \textit{animus} does not obey; Augustine wishes to believe but cannot. The repression that I articulate as part of a mental or emotional thought process is doubly painful for Augustine when transposed into the spiritual realm, for the blocks he experiences are not only mental but are blocks he imagines that his own soul builds to hinder his faith.

It would seem, then, that the “two wills” that divide Augustine in his climactic moves toward conversion are not, in fact, a carnal will and a spiritual will. Here, the body is obedient; it smingly acquiesces to the commands of the \textit{animus}. The body is therefore exculpated from condemnation in this particular moment. Instead, it is the divided \textit{animus}, which Augustine tells us contains not only the mechanisms to think, feel, and worship, but also, significantly, the mechanism of will. And, as Augustine tells us, the problem that
renders him unable to believe is not a Manichean fight between willing and not willing.\textsuperscript{92} Instead, it is the divide between the animus’s capacity to command, which it does inconclusively, and its capacity to obey, which it can only do in an incomplete way, since the command itself is incomplete. The barriers to Augustine’s faith then are cast here entirely in the realm of the animus. The command and the recipient both occupy that sacred space, and neither are corporeal, but neither are either whole.

What, then, are we to make of Augustine’s conception of autonomy? Steven Justice, like Nussbaum, takes up Augustine’s finely wrought experience of shame and attempts to place it within an economy of action and inaction. He disagrees with Nussbaum that shame is simply a product of inaction, and instead demonstrates that Augustinian shame is informed by Virgilian shame (\textit{pudor}), which does not shut down autonomous action but rather fuses knowledge with action.\textsuperscript{93} But, nevertheless, most readers of Augustine subscribe to something like Nussbaum’s understanding of the fragmented subject tormented by conflicting carnal and spiritual desires. Indeed, this divide is traced to Augustine’s articulation of the fall, by which man’s disobedience is inscribed upon his body. Nussbaum and others must be imagining \textit{City of God}’s famous book 14 when they describe the “sexual and moral unpredictability” that constitute post-lapsarian shame. Augustine describes sexual union before the fall as entirely motivated and sustained by the will:

\textsuperscript{92} non igitur monstrum partim velle, partim nolle, sed aegritudo animi est, quia non totus adsurgit veritate consuetudine praegravatus. et ideo sunt duae voluntates, quia una eorum tota non est et hoc adest alteri quod deest alteri (8.9.21).

\textsuperscript{93} “When [Dido] is still making the choice, rather than ruing the choice already made, she thinks of \textit{pudor} as simply the continuation of the course that she had chosen- and she thinks of it in contrast to being swallowed by the earth. So shame is not pusillanimity, a desire to withdraw or cancel oneself. Shame is the choice by which a capacity to act knows itself and does act; impudence closes down action: when Dido ‘dissolves her shame,’ she starts loving and stops governing. Impudence is abjection and capitulation, not cheek.” Steven Justice, “‘Shameless’: Augustine, After Augustine, and Way After Augustine” \textit{Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies} 44 (2014): 28.
An uero manus et pedes mouemus, cum uolumus, ad ea, quae his membris agenda sunt, sine ullo renisu, tanta facilitate, quanta et in nobis et in alis uideamus, maxime in artificibus quorumque operum corporalium, ubi ad exercendam infirmiorem tardioremque natu ram agilior accessit industria; et non credimus ad opus generationis filiorum, si libido non fuisset, quae peccato inoboedientiae retributa est, oboedienter hominibus ad voluntatis nutum similiter ut cetera potuisse illa membra servire? (14.23)

In Augustine’s imaginary Eden, then, penises and vaginas would be manipulated by the same skill that the ordinary post-lapsarian human employ to “command” hands and feet, or with the same prowess by which the skilled craftsman uses his tools. The sex organs are effectively corralled and subjugated entirely to the will; they become thoughtless matter upon which the decrees of the rational and spiritual capacity may enact any and all wishes.

Augustine roots the corruption of this easy bodily hierarchy in the fall: just as man disobeyed god, so now parts of the human body disobey its rational and spiritual ruler.

Augustine becomes almost poetic in his lamentation of the current, post-lapsarian, state of sexual confusion:

Sed neque ipsi amatores huius voluptatis siue ad concubitus coniugales siue ad inmunditias flagitiorum cum uoluerint commouentur; sed aliquando inportunus est ille motus poscente nullo, aliquando autem destituit inhiantem, et cum in animo concupiscentia ferveat, friget in corpore; atque ita mirum in modum non solum generandi uoluntati, uerum etiam lasciuiendi libidini libido non seruit, et cum tota plerumque menti cohibenti aduersetur, nonnumquam et aduersus se ipsa diuiditur commotoque animo in commouendo corpore se ipsa non sequitur (14.26).

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94 We move our hands and feet to perform their special functions, when we so will; this involves no reluctance on their part, and the movements are performed with all the ease we observe in our own case and in that of others. And we observe it particularly in craftsmen engaged in all kinds of physical task, where natural powers which lack strength and speed are developed by active training. Then why should we not believe that the sexual organs could have been the obedient servants of mankind, ad the bidding of will, in the same way as the other, if there had been no lust, which came in as the retribution for the sin of disobedience? This translation, as all others from the City of God, is taken from Henry Bettenson’s Penguin edition. Saint Augustine, Concerning The City of God against the Pagans (New York: Penguin Books, 1972): 585. Future translations will be cited parenthetically using page numbers from this edition.

95 In fact, not even the lovers of this kind of pleasure are moved, either to conjugal intercourse or to the impure indulgences of vice, just when they have so willed. Sometimes the impulse is an unwanted intruder, sometimes it abandons the eager lover, and desire cools off in the body while it is at boiling heat in the mind. Thus strangely does lust refuse to be a servant not only to the will to beget but even to the lust for lascivious indulgence; and although on the whole it is totally opposed to the mind’s control, it is quite often divided against itself. It arouses the mind, but does not follow its own lead by arousing the body (577).
Even those who love sex are not immune from the disappointments, insufficiencies, accidents and discrepancies that haunt erotic activity and threaten its undoing at every turn. The body or, specifically, the sexual body, can function in a way that is at odds with what the incorporeal desire or will wants. The rational or spiritual parts of the person may wish to remain chaste altogether or to limit sexual experiences to a selected partner or partners, but the body, like a naughty child, performs its excitations without regard for these mandates. Similarly, thought slightly less prudishly, the incorporeal part of the human may desire sex, but the sexual organs, through intoxication or stubborn insubordination, refuse to cooperate. These embarrassing or even shameful moments are brought about, then, by the uncomfortable disconnect or distance between the willing and desiring animus and the disobedient body. The body’s faultiness, poetically, is the ironic etching of man’s primary offense onto his very being, so that he must not only rationally register his own body’s intractableness, but that very intractability constitutes the experience of bodily shame. That is, he experiences shame because his body cannot or will not do what he wants it to do.

As a reader may have already noted, however, this particular aspect of Augustinian orthodoxy is at odds with Augustine’s description of his monstrous doubling of wills in the Confessions. There, the body is described as entirely passive and controlled utterly by the incorporeal self. It is the mind and spirit, however, which attempt to govern themselves and utterly fail; thus commanding desire is turned against itself and ultimately fragments the animus. This passage would seem to powerfully undermine the above conception of a disobedient fallen body that performs its own disgrace and fosters shame through its sexual mutinies.
How are we to understand such a discrepancy in Augustine’s corpus? We might resort to historical, biological, or chronological stratagems and we would be in good company; Pelagius is said to have been able to quote youthful Augustine against aging Augustine. The *Confessions* were completed approximately twelve years before *City of God* was begun, and a significant twenty-six years before its completion date. Perhaps in that time, Augustine a distanced himself from his Manichean roots enough for him to return to a more critical and compartmentalized view of the human creature, or had developed his theorizations of primary sinfulness enough to comment explicitly on the role of the body therein. Much of the *Confessions*, however, is occupied with the same tension of physical impulse opposing incorporeal will that characterizes his theorizations of the fall in *City of God*; moreover, as we shall see, *City of God* allows for some ambiguity on the question of physical and rational or spiritual desires. So, while I cannot suggest that Augustine’s corpus should be read as a monolith, and while I certainly acknowledge significant ambiguity and ambivalence therein, I contend that such ambiguity and such ambivalences are significant to understanding Augustine and his medieval legacy, rather than grounds for overlooking any difficulty therein.

Let us, then, attend to this particular inconsistency. It would seem as though, at least part of the time, or at least in some instances, the body still enjoys the passive submission to the reigning rational and spiritual entities that characterized its perfect existence in Eden. How can a body be entirely controlled by the *animus*, and yet also the inability of the *animus* to control the body be the primary indicator of human sinfulness and the primary experience of human shame?

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96 All, for instance, of the three earlier concerns with bodily appetite, come from the *Confessions*.
We may suggest a fairly straightforward solution to this difficulty. Augustine does not require that the entire fallen body be placed under its own willful mismanagement and rendered impervious to the commands of the incorporeal self. Instead, it is specifically the sexual body that enacts human disobedience. Indeed, when the Augustine of the *Confessions* celebrates the body's tractable nature, he refers specifically to hand and feet; these are the same body parts that the Augustine of the *City of God* also claims may be easily managed by the mind or spirit. In fact, fallen humans are perfectable in their manual skills and labors; craftsmen can, through practice, achieve feats of workmanship or of manual manipulation that elude the unpracticed person. So, not only can the hands receive commands, they can improve their performance and respond to those commands more perfectly over time.

The fallen sexual body, is seemingly excluded from this picture of physical responsiveness to rational or spiritual will. Augustine’s characterization refers specifically to the *pudenda*, which he helpfully glosses as the “parts of shame.” Moreover, his descriptions both of Edenic sexuality and of fallen sexuality revolve around the operations and machinations of the male member. During its Edenic period of attentive responsiveness, it is Adam’s “slack and soft” member that would have “stretched out” and “stiffened” according to his will. After the fall, the troublesome conditions Augustine laments are characterized by the unbidden impulse attending the phallus, or spuriously leaving it when it is most required. (Augustine does not spend much time thinking about the female sexual body, but it must, I think, be assumed that before the fall, Eve’s vagina would have been as much under the control of her will as Adam’s penis, and that after the fall it must suffer from similar confusions, even if those confusions are not necessarily
performed on the exterior.) So, it seems that the disgraceful and shame-inducing work of the fall on bodies can conveniently be excised and applied only to the genitals, thereby solving the inconsistency I note above.

There are, however, certain difficulties with this explanation. The first is that it requires a kind of compartmentalization of the body that must be foreign to any experiences of excitation, even those Augustine describes. The penis and vagina do not exist on another physical plane; even in a fallen person, the excitations and frustrations, lamentable though they may be, for Augustine cannot be divorced from the rest of the body the way that Augustine suggests that they have been divorced from the incorporeal will. That is, it cannot be so easy to distinguish between the sexual body and the non-sexual body as this line of thought would require. Let us, for instance, examine one of Augustine’s first sexual experiences: as a teenager, he visits the bathhouse with his father, where his father notes the young Augustine’s physical maturation with joy: “quin immo ubi me ille pater in balneis vidit pubescentem et inquieta indutum adulescentia, quasi iam ex hoc in nepotes gestiret, gaudens matri indicavit, gaudens vinulentia...” I think we may safely assume that the marks of unquiet adolescence and virility that Augustine’s father notes in his naked body must be the comings and going of his erections. These erections seem entirely unbidden; the young Augustine is likely not attempting to penetrate anything at that moment, nor is it likely that he would self-stimulate in front of his father and other men. Instead, he is experiencing early and spontaneous excitations of his member. And yet, though they are unbidden rationally or spiritually, I do not think we can suggest that these

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97 Indeed, when at the bathhouse my father saw that I was showing signs of virility and the stirrings of adolescence, he was overjoyed to suppose that he would now be having grandchildren, and told my mother so” (26-27).
erections are entirely unmotivated experientially or physically. Let us for instance take up the location and its stimuli. Augustine would be at a bathhouse, naked, among other naked men, partaking in bathing, steam, a fluctuation of temperatures, potentially a massage with oils, and other activities of the type the young Augustine experienced must have been common under such circumstances, and must, I think, have had to do with the physical stimuli, not simply of the phallus, but of the entire body. Indeed, almost every erogenous zone would have been stimulated in some way and even if penetration or other stimulation were not the order of the day, sexual excitation stemming from the stimulation of the body proper would be expected. Augustine’s father certainly takes his son’s erections to be natural, normal, and joyful experiences. There is no mention of their timing or setting; instead, the father is merely overjoyed at this demonstration of his son’s potency.

This episode of excitations at the bath must suggest another, potentially even more problematic qualifier for the above attempt to cordon the sexual body off from the obedient and perfectable non-sexual body. Augustine’s father takes his son’s spontaneous erections to be evidence of his healthy sexual development and his fertility. That is, he takes these erections to be the early indications of a future sexual life that will produce grandchildren. He therefore understands these early and perhaps brief moments of excitation to indicate the potential for a long and fruitful sexual career. Such a characterization of Augustine’s sexuality allows his phallus to function like his hands and other body parts as a member whose work can be learned and perfected over time. Certainly Augustine’s father would not assume that the sixteen-year-old’s spontaneous moments of excitement indicate the duration of the erections the grown Augustine would use to penetrate (and fertilize) his partner. Instead, they are the initial demonstrations of that capacity, much as a baby’s first
tottering steps indicate the likelihood of that child’s future abilities to walk and run with ease. The sexual body, then, and even the very member on which Augustine focuses the bulk of his post-lapsarian theory of sexuality, must here be understood to function as at least partially controlled by the rational capacity in its perfectibility and its ability to acquire skill over time in Augustine’s own adolescent experience.

We are left, then, with a fallen sexual body that cannot be divorced from its non-sexual components in Augustine’s corpus and according to his own experiences, and a sexual body that can, through practice, achieve skill not unlike the craftsman’s manual prowess that Augustine celebrates. I suggest that this ambiguity in Augustine’s corpus must be taken up seriously and understood as a powerful train of thought by which the post-Edenic body is not nearly as degraded as certain famous passages of the City of God take it to be. Here, then, Augustine suggests a kind of continuity that bridges the rupture of the fall, and that can be understood in bodily terms. Indeed, the very perfectibility of the body allows that the post-Edenic human may approximate the kind of graceful existence that Augustine suggests was the provenance of the first humans in their naturalistic paradisal home. Through craftsmanship, humans can build the objects and cultivate the land around them in order to provide for themselves without strain or toil. Through athletic training, the human creature can build a healthy body that will suffer the aging process with relative ease. And, perhaps most surprisingly, as I have elucidated here, the sexual body can be trained and practiced so as to perform productively and joyfully. We must not take this theorization of physical continuity as Augustine’s only view of the post-lapsarian body, but it is a significant strain of Augustinian thought routinely overlooked in favor of his more anxiously prudish passages. I suggest that while the theorizations of division and rupture:
separation of Edenic space and time from fallen space and time; division of body and soul; compartmentalization of the body proper; have been taken up by medieval and early modern theologians and philosophers, Augustine’s theorizations of continuity are taken up by the poets.

I propose, then, that Nussbaum and others are, perhaps, unsurprisingly, the heirs of an orthodox theological and philosophical line of thought that takes Augustine’s disparagement of the body at face value and locates his theorizations of shame, autonomy, and fallen spirituality in a divide between body and animus that maps neatly onto the divide of the fall. Certainly, Augustine’s dualism became the central piece of his thinking for the scholastics, for Luther and Calvin, and now, it is taken up and expounded by philosophers in the academy.

But, as we see in my readings above, this is not the only strain of Augustinian thought to be culled from his corpus. What, then, of Augustine’s ambiguities and inconsistencies that suggest the fallen body to be redeemable, or, at least, not to differ so very much from the unfallen body? It is my contention that this strain of Augustinian thought was taken up and expounded by vernacular poets, particularly Geoffrey Chaucer and, later, John Milton. Indeed, I suggest that Chaucer’s rather heterodox imaginings of naturalism must be rooted in his reclaiming and repurposing of Augustine’s theorizations that continuity between a pre- and post-lapsarian state is inscribed on the human body.

Let us turn, then, to Chaucer’s Miller’s Tale. The tale belies its fabliaux structure by entering into a complex philosophical treatment of the mechanisms of wanting in the face of the other’s superior (if imaginary) wholeness. Central to this philosophical treatment is
the notion of naturalism. What, the Miller asks us, is natural physical behavior for two young lovers? For a husband and wife? For the human body in general?

Any naturalistic reading of the Miller’s Tale hinges on the role of the young wife Alisoun “as the object of all desires, may be said to stand at the tale’s center; the way in which she moves, along with the way in which the others move toward her, decisively establishes its underlying ethos.” Mark Miller makes the case even more strongly; Alisoun is the “object of desire that sets the plot and all of the male characters in motion; and, as the portrait of her that introduces her into the tale suggests, she functions as both the single most compelling instance of a desirable natural object and as a synecdoche for the plentitude of pleasure that the rest of nature offers...” Alisoun’s functioning as the unquestionable object of all desire and her embodiment of the mechanisms of naturalism themselves cause her to become an analogue for a paradisal space. She functions within the tale as a little world that comprises within itself all of the elements of a locus amoenus. Alisoun is described with a quick succession of incongruous images of plant and animal life: she is a “wezele,” a “pere-jonette tree,” a “swalwe,” a “kyde or calf,” a “colt” with a mouth of honey or apples, and finally, a “prymerole” and a “piggesnye.” This cubist collage of images offers an alternative to the Petrarchan top-down description of a lady, in which each of her features are aligned with its perfected form. Instead, Alisoun is a veritable pantheon of diverse images of the natural world, simultaneously tree, bird, mammal and flower.

98 V.A. Kolve reads the Miller as celebrating the pure and uncomplicated motivations that prompt young people to enjoy one another’s bodies. Mark Miller shows that, while the Miller is indeed occupied with this fantasy, he unsettles the ideal at every turn by measuring masculine perversity against the temptation of Alisoun.


100 Mark Miller, Philosophical Chaucer, 40-41.
Often absent from these celebrations of Alisoun’s naturalism, however, is an account
the necessary cherry-picking that the reader must engage in in order to portray Alisoun
purely as the verdant paradisal space. Let us examine the first few lines of Chaucer’s
description of Alisoun:

Fair was this yonge wyf, and therwithal
As any wezele hir body gent and smal.
A ceyn she werede, barred al of silk,
A barmclooth eek as whit as morne milk
Upon hir lendes, ful of many a gore. (I 3233-3237)

Alisoun, simply named here the “yonge wyf,” is indeed first described as the slender weasel,
highlighting her slim figure. The long, thin animal that uses its narrow shape to fit through
its burrows and trap its prey evokes a slim, snaking, naked torso. But, the following line
radically compromises the animalistic imagery: Alisoun is wearing a “ceyn,” a belt,
ornamented with silk. Her belt highlights her slender waist, but it also restricts it, girds it.
The term “barred,” often used to describe the decorative striping of girdles and other items
of clothing, also retains the more contemporary sense of barrier, obstacle, or barricade. Her
belt, then, is a literal, as well as figurative, obstacle between the viewer and Alisoun’s
denuded waist beneath. Her belt creates a new waist for Alisoun and its status as an upper-
middle-strata article of dress, made of expensive silk and carefully decorated, creates a new
Alisoun, one who is fabricated not by a conglomeration of naturalistic images, but rather by
bourgeois clothing.

Chaucer’s juxtaposition of flora and fauna to items of dress persists throughout the
lengthy descriptive passage. Alisoun’s shape is constructed further by a milk-white apron;
her loins are flounced, her tree-like shape is confined within black silk, and her coltish
shape is accentuated by a leather purse hanging from her girdle, while her nimble feet and
legs are laced up in high boots. Alisoun’s clothing enclose and contain her animalistic (and
horticultural) naturalism, and mark her clearly as a member of the emergent middle strata, a well-heeled wife whose neat and costly attire demonstrate the financial viability and respectability of her husband and household. Paul Strohm has demonstrated that 14th century conventions of dress do not simply adhere to a static position in society, but rather actively construct that position.101 Moneyed merchants and other members of the wealthy middle strata could effectively purchase the vestments of nobility (albeit for exorbitant prices) and dress as counts and barons. Alisoun’s clothing, then, literally constructs her specific social position in the urban milieu.

This construction of Alisoun-as-bourgeois-wife would seem to stand in direct contradiction to the Alisoun who is simultaneously tree, blossom, and animal. How can Alisoun simultaneously represent a perfect natural paradise that holds the potential to fulfill all desires, and also be herself physically built by the restrictive conventions of her dress? In their own ways, Kolve, Miller, and Strohm each leave this question unanswered. Kolve and Miller focus only on the aspects of Alisoun’s description that emphasize her naturalism; Strohm’s theory suggests that Alisoun’s clothing alone constitutes her social identity. And yet, the Miller’s text integrates Alisoun’s naturalism seamlessly into his articulation of her dress; we must then pursue a theory that will allow us to account for the relationship between these two characterizations of Alisoun.

I suggest that The Miller’s representation of Alisoun evokes not simply a natural paradise, but an Edenic paradisal state. Read as such, we can attempt to understand the ambiguity that has infused other readings. Like the paradisal garden, she is simultaneously animal kingdom, all types of trees, plants, blossoms and blooms. She is in a constant state of

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readiness, of fecundity, and of overflowing plenty. Like the garden, in her state of richness, she seems to hold the fulfillment of any desire that can be answered in the natural world; therefore, she presents an opportunity to think through the “naturalness” of desire. But, when we think about Alisoun as a human being, and specifically as a woman, we are disallowed from placing her squarely in the garden that she represents. The almost obsessive descriptions of her clothing, all of which construct her social status, cover the naked body that Alisoun would have in an Edenic state, and place her squarely in the post-Edenic fallen world where bodies must be covered. Indeed, Nicholas’s grab at Alisoun’s (clothed) “queynte” reminds us that her matronly clothes cover over a sexual body. Alisoun’s clothing not only constructs her social identity, but also her sexual identity. It is essentially an updated fig-leaf ensemble that emphasizes the sanction on accessing the body beneath.

Alisoun, then, simultaneously represents a pre-lapsarian Eden and a kind of individuality that could only be constructed after the fall. We can suggest, then, that a kind of continuity between a pre-fallen Eden and a fallen world is part of the Miller’s project. It is not so easy to separate theories of naturalism from theories of social and sexual construction. That is, if perversity is characterized by that which opposes or defers an authentic impulse to attain something desirable, Alisoun herself embodies perversity; the parts of her that display the fulfillments of desire are contained and covered over.

Importantly, though, it is in this state that Alisoun is touted as the figure any man should desire. In other words, Alisoun is sexier, is more desirable, in her black silk dress and high boots, than she would be in the nude. There is, then, something “natural” about
deferral; the Miller’s project ultimately cannot imagine an appropriate response to desire that does not also contain something non-natural, something perverse.

This conclusion in itself is not particularly novel. Miller, Burger, Dinshaw and others who attend to the queer resonances of the tale locate an integration of naturalism and some kind of deferral or catharsis in Chaucer’s poetic project and point to Alisoun’s centrality in any paradigms of natural and unnatural desire. What is novel, and what must be accounted for more scrupulously, is the way in which Chaucer’s formation of the Alisoun figure elaborates a current of Augustinian thought that centers on the theorization of Eden as origin not of a linear telos but rather of a cyclical return. As a little garden all her own, Alisoun embodies the Eden garden in its originary moment; this is what Kolve celebrates as her unbridled and overflowing resemblance of the natural world. But, as a bourgeoise housewife whose proper clothing construct her visual identity, Alisoun also embodies the role of Eve, whose generative wifely capacities and the signifiers of those capacities are enmeshed into a logic of the fall. Indeed, Eve is not named until after the fall, and her name is tied to her ability to produce children, which she also does not do until after the fall.102

Alisoun, then, embodies a figure of Augustinian continuity: she is simultaneously pre- and post-lapsarian, and anything desirable or natural about her depends upon her representation of or access to both worlds. In her animalistic capacities, Alisoun represents the kind of unmitigated but wholly acceptable desire that emanates from an Edenic creature created pure and living comfortably in a body that desires only what is good for it. In her constrictive clothing, Alisoun represents the kind of desire which must be managed, thought through, restrained, and mitigated; this is the desire of the fallen world. But, as

102 “And Adam called the name of his wife Eve: because she was the mother of all the living” (Gen 3:20).
both kinds of desire are fused in one altogether lovely young woman who seamlessly
integrates the two, Alisoun therefore demonstrates a potential not for rupture between one
“good” and one “bad” experience of desire, nor does she exhibit shameful inaction. Instead,
Alisoun functions as both the impetus for and the bearer of a hybrid desire that gracefully
takes from both an Edenic model and a fallen model.

Alisoun must then represent the object of both a rational or spiritual desire and a
carnal or spontaneous desire. Nicholas’s grab at Alisoun’s clothed “queynte,” often read as
the Miller’s enthusiastically endorsed method of courtship, certainly seems to demonstrate
the biological imperative toward sex. In obeying the spontaneous commands of his body,
Nicholas seems to live authentically in line with his desires, and acts on them rather than
sublimating or transmuting them. Nicholas’s unceremonious grabbing at Alisoun’s sex has
therefore been taken example of proper naturalistic behavior. Absolon, on the other hand,
performs a comedic caricature of a courtly lover who refuses to give credence to his
biological desires and instead transforms them into narratives that disallow their
fulfillment. He must then be “unnatural,” or perverse in some way. In each case, Alisoun is
the target of either attentions, whether physical or rational.

We should recall, however, that for Augustine the spontaneous imperatives of the
body do not typically constitute its naturalism. In Eden, the human creature experienced no
spontaneous physical manifestations of desire; it is only after the fall that the human
becomes victim, as it were, to his or her bodily impulses. And yet, as I have demonstrated
above, Augustine’s corpus does allow for the perfectability of even the fallen body, and
even the fallen sexual body, in its actions and desires. Augustine’s moment in the
bathhouse with his father demonstrates his body’s capacity for spontaneous manifestations
of desire, as well as the assumption (which his successful sexual career later in life must
give credence to) that these extemporaneous erections would be able to be understood,
controlled, used, and enjoyed. The natural state of the human creature, for Augustine, then
is a synthesis of the pre-lapsarian rationality coupled with post-lapsarian physical desires.
The human can cultivate and improve his sexual responses, thereby approaching by
experience the kind of erotics that the unfallen human enjoyed.

This is indeed the case with Nicholas and Alisoun. We often forget that Alisoun does
not respond immediately to Nicholas’s heavy-handed approach; in order to buy into the
Miller’s paradigm of animalistic coupling that he articulates in his prologue as an antithesis
to the Knight’s meandering view of courtship, we tend to imagine that when Nicholas grabs
Alisoun’s sex, Alisoun responds with an enthusiastic acquiescence. Indeed, were she the
kind of animal who only requires brief physical stimulation to feel herself ready and
excited for sex, she certainly would. But Alisoun is not so:

And prively he caught hire by the queynte,
And seyde, “Ywis, but if ich have my wille,
For deere love of thee, lemmam, I spille.”
And heeld hire harde by the haunchebones,
And seyde, “Lemman, love me al atones,
Or I wol dyen, also God me save?”
And she sproong as a colt dooth in the trave,
And with hir heed she wryed faste awey,
And seyde, “I wol nat kisse thee, by my fey!
Why, lat be?” quod she. “Lat be Nicholas,
Or I wol crie ‘out, harrow’ and ‘allas’!
Do wey youre hands, for youre curteisy!
This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye,
And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,
That she hir love hym graunted atte laste (I 3276-3290).

Alisoun does respond to Nicholas’s grabbing in an impulsively physical way, but it is
not with a spontaneous demonstration of sexual desire. Instead, Alisoun jumps like a horse
who is being held in a frame to be shod. Her body reacts seemingly without any command
from her rational capacities but performed in accordance with them. She reacts in such a way as to place distance between her body and Nicholas’s. It is not only her genitals and her buttock and hips that she jolts away from Nicholas’s hands; she even wrenches her head away from him. Alisoun’s moment of impulse-driven flight must disabuse us of any notion that Alisoun is simply trying to be coquettish, or that she speaks words she does not mean. She, like Nicholas, voices the desire that her body performs, and in this moment, both her rational and physical devices are united in the wish to move away from Nicholas’s hands; she speaks in perfect accordance with her body’s actions when she tells Nicholas to take his hands away, and that she does not want to kiss him.

What, then, effects the change in Alisoun’s affections a scant ten lines later? We are given a simple and conventional theorization: Nicholas begged Alisoun for “mercy” and “spake so faire and profred him so faste” that Alisoun gave in and granted him her love. Normative though these expressions may be, they are telling for the tale’s construction of desire. Evidently, Alisoun is not moved by physical foreplay, but rather by the courtship of speech. Mercy tends to be an aphrodisiac in Chaucer’s chivalric romances; Emily gives in to Palamon by the workings of mercy, and Criseyde does the same with Troilus; Alisoun is similarly affected.

Not only does Nicholas beg for mercy, he also speaks beautifully to Alisoun and, in almost legal terms, presses his suit on her. We must imagine this speech to be some combination of his feelings for Alisoun, his admiration for her and his great desire for her, as well as his reasons for deserving her favor and the unhappiness and despair that will befall him should she deny his petition. It is this kind of speaking that changes Alisoun’s
mind and causes her to grant Nicholas her love and enter into the plotting and planning with him that will drive the fabliaux narrative.

Alisoun, then, and not Nicholas, is the author of the tale’s first deferral of sexual gratification. According to the above passage, she does so in a way that adheres with her own physical impulses but, even more importantly, in a way that allows for the cultivation of her own desire for Nicholas. The deferral that is so sexy for Alisoun proves enticing to Nicholas as well, and the two spend the rest of the tale planning for and then enjoying their rendezvous. Their plans move the plot forward and enhance the pleasure the reader takes in the clever tale, and seem also to enhance and spice the desire that Alisoun and Nicholas feel for one another. That is, had they consummated their attraction the moment Nicholas grabbed at Alisoun’s sex, they would have cheated the reader out of the pleasure of the tale, and likely would have cheated one another out of the exciting build of desire. Alisoun and Nicholas, therefore, perform the kind of naturalistic fusion of rational and physical that Augustine suggests, and that is characterized primarily by the development and cultivation of sexual desire.

I suggest, then, that Alisoun and Nicholas’s courtship contains within it a theorization of an Edenic erotic state that has not been irrevocably cheapened by the fall, but that can instead be reclaimed. Alisoun and Nicholas’s erotic life is shown to be perfectable, and it is through interaction with the rational that the physical becomes exciting and sexy to them. The fallen body, then, is not simply a canvas on which shame and

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Miller suggests that Nicholas is punished for “his tendency to defer animal satisfaction” while “[Alisoun] alone never acts in such a way as to erect an artificial barrier between herself and her own pleasure; she alone consistently lets instinct settle the questions of what to do... and as a result she alone remains unpunished.” Mark Miller, *Philosophical Chaucer*, 57. I push against the physicality of this characterization of Alisoun’s instinct. By my reading, Alisoun certainly does construct and engage with artificial barriers, but she does so in a way that promotes, rather than shuts down, action.
sin have been inscribed. It is, instead, a body that can be taught to return, as it were, to the pleasing symbiosis of rational and physical that it enjoyed in Augustine’s Eden. The sexual body is instead the interactive locus which performs, and with which is performed, the drama of continuity.

The above reading encourages us to imagine Alisoun and Nicholas, if not as woodland creatures, then at least as humans who have successfully bridged the gap between a fallen sexual life and an Edenic sexual life, and who are therefore able to enjoy the fruits of spontaneous desire fused with the enticing deferral that ripens their attraction. This reading tempts us therefore to imagine Alisoun and Nicholas as effectively having washed away the deleterious effects of the fall and having regained a state of purity that makes their erotic and narrative fulfillment possible. Alisoun and Nicholas are un-fallen, un-punished.

But what of the tale’s ending? Nicholas’s newly reclaimed Edenic body is, in no uncertain terms, and rather unceremoniously, blighted by Absolon’s red-hot poker. Not only is this moment funny in itself, it is the quintessential fabliaux device that brings the tale to its close and that neatly packages the long and unnecessary plotting into a punch line. It is therefore necessary to the plot of the tale, and cannot be overlooked in any theorization of the erotic body that the tale constructs.

We might wish to read this moment as a humorous unraveling of all the careful continuity that Alisoun and Nicholas have curated up until this moment. It’s all very well to imagine reclaiming an Edenic state, this reading might go, but only until those Edenic bodies are put into action and actually engage in erotic activities. Then, they come up against all sorts of fallen-world obstacles: a duped husband; a spurned suitor; the very
constructs of house, garden, barn, city street, and neighboring edifices. In fact, even when Nicholas imagines inhabiting a newly-washed world when describing the aftereffects of the flood to John, he is unable to build a proto-Eden and instead has to imagine an uncomfortable triumvirate swimming the seas and setting up a new life for themselves.  

The blow that Nicholas sustains, then, and the hands-breadth of flesh that it removes from his rear, might be understood as punitive or corrective. Glenn Burger theorizes that the red-hot poker cauterizes Nicholas, and therefore corrects his inadequate and non-normative masculinity and insists instead on his inhabiting a static and acceptable sexual identity. In dualistic Augustinian terms of the kind Nussmaum espouses, the blow might similarly be understood as a physical punishment for the transgressive erotics that Nicholas pioneers and which which he infects Alisoun. Not so fast, this reading goes. The fallen body is always susceptible to pain, disfigurement, and even to death; any attempt to circumvent the fall will end with a smarting reminder of its permanence. In fact, the red hot poker might seem like a cruel but amusing play on the spontaneous physicality that Alisoun and Nicholas attempt to combine with their rational faculties. The poker demonstrates to Nicholas the other side of spontaneous physicality: like Alisoun jumping from him, he now

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Whan that the water comth, that we may go
And breke an hole an heigh, upon the gable,
Unto the gardyn-ward, over the stable
That we may freely passen forth oure way
Whan that the grete shour is goon away.
Thanne shaltou swymme as myrie, I undertake,
As dooth the white doke after hire drake.
Thanne wol I clepe, ‘How Alison! How John!’
Be myrie, for the flood wol passe anon.’
And thou wolt seyn, ‘Hayl, maister Nicholay! Good morwe, I se thee wel, for it is day.
And thane shul we be lordes al oure lyf
Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf (I 3570-3582).
must jump away from the erect and flaming tool that penetrates him with all too little warning.

And yet, this somber reading by which Nicholas is punished for stepping outside the bounds of the fallen world and attempting to reclaim the Edenic body does not conform to the tale’s general ethos nor to its narrative trajectory. Though the tale clearly expounds philosophical and even theological ideology, it does not do so in a moralizing manner; punishing Nicholas for his transgressions is ultimately too overt and too much of a catechization for the fabliaux to support. We would also have to reconcile Nicholas’s punishment with a number of other factors that do not align with it. First, why should Nicholas’s heterodox behavior be punished while Alisoun gets off scott-free? As a proto-Eve, Alisoun should receive an even more harsh and punitive sentence than her proto-Adam. Then there is the matter of the permanence of Nicholas’s affliction. Though clearly the blow he sustains is extremely painful, so much so that Nicholas imagines that he might die, he seems to revive in a matter of seconds. The tale’s comedic timing depends on Nicholas’s cry for “water!” waking the slumbering John and causing him to cut the cord that holds his kneading tub up to the ceiling. He falls, and breaks his arm. At the very moment that they hear the crash, “Up stirte hire Alison and Nicholay, And criden “Out” and “Harrow” in the strete” (I 3824-3825). At the very most, a minute or two may have elapsed between Nicholas’s blow to the rump and his hurried rush to the street, with Alisoun, to mock John before all of his neighbors.

Without overly diminishing Nicholas’s injury, it would not seem to be a particularly threatening one. In fact, Nicholas retains his descriptor “hende,” and goes on to tell all of the neighbors about John’s obsession with Noah’s flood and his “fantasie” and “vanytee”
that caused him to suspend himself in the rafters of his roof. He no longer seems to be suffering and, in fact, is acting exactly as one might expect him to act had the blow never taken place. It is John, and not Nicholas, who becomes the butt of the fabliaux ending, humiliated before the town and never believed again while his wife enjoys the bedroom company of his boarder. And it is John’s humiliation that prompts the Reeve, also a carpenter, to angrily continue the “quiting” game and tell his malicious tale. (The clerk, we may note, does not voice offense at the Miller’s portrayal of Nicholas.) So, if the poker blow were to function as a warning against the perils of attempting to reinhabit an Edenic space and to perfect the fallen body by an engagement with Edenic erotics, it would do so very poorly indeed.
There’s Nothing There: Bodies that Don’t Matter in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*

Chaucer continues his investigation of the Edenic body with a second, even more physically minded, Alisoun. The *Wife of Bath’s Prologue* has long been read as a meditation, whether factual or farcical, on the female body and its various claims to autonomy and desire. So much, indeed, has been made of Alisoun’s physicality, both by Chaucer’s construction of her and by the critical tradition that examines and reworks her, that her substantive textuality tend often to be brushed aside. Alisoun’s body, we are told, constitutes her significant contribution both to Chaucer’s corpus and to the trajectory of feminist, disabilities scholarship and gender studies to which her *Prologue* pertain, whereas her words, and indeed the complex meetings of textual traditions that construct her, are imagined to be straightforward and easily understood. Indeed, just as the Miller’s Alisoun is imagined to be a wholly natural being despite her bourgeois dress, Chaucer’s Alisoun of Bath is imagined to be a physical body rather than either a construction of text, or an agent of a text’s construction. I shall push back against this tradition by demonstrating that Alisoun of Bath’s seductive physicality takes up and expounds an Augustinian ambivalence with regard to the fallen body’s depraved state, and shall interrogate the text that constructs Alisoun as well as the texts placed into Alisoun’s mouth, in order to better understand the role of what we might call bodily rhetoric in Alisoun’s identity formation, as well as in the suggestion of continuity between an Edenic and a post-Edenic body.

Alisoun of Bath employs Adam’s status as first human and first male to draw a comparison between the modes of expression of men and women or, more specifically,
between clerks and wives.\textsuperscript{105} It is the first mention of Adam in the \textit{Canterbury Tales}, and one of only eight mentions that appear outside the Parson's lengthy sermoming. As Hanson notes, following Carruthers's groundbreaking work, Alisoun employs Adam in order to differentiate between the motivations of clerks from those of women; each has a rather different tale to tell, and each, she claims, could shape the perceptions of an impressionable audience:

\begin{quote}
Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?
By God, if women hadde written stories,
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,
They wolde han written of men moore wikkednesse
Than all the mark of Adam may redresse (III 692-696).
\end{quote}

Following the feminist tradition, Carolyn Dinshaw famously elides clerky writing with violence against the female corpus. For her, the “mark of Adam” is, as indeed is the mark of Adam Scriven, “both the generic sign (derived from the first man) of masculine humanity and the writing that men (such as Adam scriveyn) do.”\textsuperscript{106} Dinshaw takes up the latter understanding of Adam's mark, a cipher or symbol on the page, which not only constructs the female creature rhetoricly as variously depraved, stupid, silly, and untrustworthy, but which also by these machinations effect and sustain violence against “people with real bodies.”\textsuperscript{107} Dinshaw reads the \textit{Wife of Bath's Tale} as positing masculine writing against a woman with a real body; for her, Alisoun champions the phenomenological experience of the female body against the destructive antifeminism of the clerk's pen.\textsuperscript{108} For her, then, the “mark of Adam” must necessarily be the mark that

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{105} Elaine Tuttle Hanson highlights this idea in the title of her 1988 essay \textit{The Wife of Bath and the Mark of Adam}. Elaine Tuttle Hanson, “The Wife of Bath and the Mark of Adam” \textit{Women's Studies} 15 (1988): 399-416.
\textsuperscript{106} Carolyn Dinshaw, \textit{Chaucer's Sexual Poetics}, 9.
\textsuperscript{107} Carolyn Dinshaw, \textit{Chaucer's Sexual Poetics}, 12.
\textsuperscript{108} Carolyn Dinshaw, \textit{Chaucer's Sexual Poetics}, 113-132.
\end{footnotes}
Adam puts on paper, which attempts to control and even to violate the “real body” of Chaucer’s Alisoun. In recent years, medievalists interested in studying disability have picked up Dinshaw’s ball and run hard. Tory Vandeventer Pearman, for instance, notes “That Alisoun admits to feeling the painful bruises that Jankin leaves on her body makes evident his sometimes violent treatment of her; her body becomes the text that documents the material effects that antifeminist discourse and unreliable laws can have on women.”

Edna Edith Sayers puts it even more dramatically:

It is unlikely to be the case... that Chaucer and his intended audience would have regarded Jankin’s battering as common or typical, of the Wife’s jaunty reinterpretation of it as yet another brilliant example of her manipulative playacting. Head trauma so severe as to cause any permanent loss of hearing is very severe indeed, occurring rarely today and then under extreme conditions such as the motorcycle crash that deafened former Gallaudet president I. King Jordan. That the sometime clerk and bookworm Jankin could pack that kind of punch is fairly unlikely, but a large bound book hurled from a short distance might do it, and this is perhaps what Chaucer imagined and why he didn’t rhyme ‘lyst’ with ‘fist’...That he burns the book is superfluous, really: his only purpose with it was to abuse his wife and this he can no longer do since she can no longer understand his words. The book has deafened her.

Leaving aside the fact that the Wife’s jubilant interruption with her “joly body” upon which such formulations partially rest would be impossible were Sayers entirely right since the Wife would not be able to hear Harry Bailey call upon the Parson to speak, both Sayers and Pearman take up Jankin’s clerkly writings in order to interpret the violence he effects against Alisoun’s body. The nature of their fight is not that of writing against writing or of body against body, but rather of patriarchal writing against female body.

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111 [Bailey] then asks another one of “ye learned men in lore,” the Parson, to tell a tale. But the prospect of a suffocating sermon, especially after the Man of Law’s tale, is too much for the Wife of Bath. Out of this company of “goode men” the voice of the woman bursts: “Nay, by my fader soule, that schal he nat! ... He schal no gospel glosen here ne teche.” Instead, My joly body schal a tale telle,” a tale having nothing to do with “philosophie, / Ne phislyas, ne termes queinte of lawe.” The Wife opposes her tale to the “lerned men’s” lore: it is her “joly body” against their oppressive teaching and glossing.” Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics*, 113.
The disability studies angle must indeed contribute valuable and often-overlooked elements to any conversation on Chaucer’s Alisoun. And yet, just as does the previous critical tradition, which overlooked or skated over the violence effected upon the female body, the present trend also overlooks or papers over certain other salient elements of the tale which might actually augment their arguments. One such element is the physical and even biological resonance of Chaucer’s “mark of Adam”; let us turn to it now. Benson glosses the “mark of Adam” simply as “male sex” which must be accurate, but which does not attend to the rather odd construction of this particular kind of masculinity and its function according to Alisoun. “Mark” or “merk,” aside from two references to the evangelist’s name, appears seven times through throughout the Canterbury Tales, and almost always in a religious context. The Parson uses the term in order to demonstrate the clear sign of a righteous person’s commitment to God: he who is baptized receives the “mark of baptesme,” (X 98) and those who take holy orders promise themselves to the service of God and demonstrate this by means of their “especial signe and mark of chastitee to shewe that they been joined to chastitee” (X 893A). For the Parson, as for the Clerk’s Griselda, who has “marked” her children with the cross, a mark is an invisible but a clear and committed emanation of one of the sacraments. The Pardoner plays with this conception of a mark, claiming that he has made “an hundred mark sith I was pardon” (390). For the Pardoner, a mark is also an emanation or after-effect of a sacrament performed, but it takes of the form of money: a “mark” here is the equivalent of thirteen shillings and four pence. In true fashion, the Pardoner elides a spiritual façade with a self-serving profit.
Alisoun of Bath similarly elides the Parson’s hidden or secret mark with a physical manifestation of its significance. She notes that her proclivity toward love is a product of her astrological predestination; she could never love in moderation because her “constellacioun” had other plans for her:

By vertu of my constellacioun
That made me I koude noght withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,
And also in another privee place.
For God so wys be my savaciou,
I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun,
But evere folwede myn appetit (III 616-623; emphasis mine).

Here, perhaps echoing the illicit union of Venus and Mars, Alisoun demonstrates that her excitement for sex and her inability to turn away a good lover is directly related to her “chamber of Venus,” which seems to have a mind of its own, and her mark(s) of Mars. She notes that she has one mark of Mars on her face; this is likely a reddish birthmark named for the crimson hue of the planet. She then notes that she has one in “another privee place”; coming two lines after a reference to her vagina, and fifteen lines after her boast of having “the best quoniam myghte be” it is safe to assume that this private place is indeed her genitalia. Mars and Venus converge exactly in this private place; the mark of Mars highlights the chamber of Venus. According to Alisoun, she is unable to withdraw her highly charged sexual body from a good and willing participant because of these strong astrological forces which propel her to follow her sexual desires.

For Alisoun, then, the “mark” is a physical sign, a birthmark, that also signifies her predestined and cosmologically determined desires and courses of action. It is not simply that her planetary alignments give Alisoun the desire to have sex, but actually enforce the
action, effectively tying her up and providing her sexual body to the next “good felawe” who comes along.

The “mark of Adam,” then, seems as though it must similarly be an outward physical manifestation of his “adam-ness,” his masculinity. This mark, presumably, his genitalia, stands in as a synecdoche for the total man and then again as the sum total of all men; the mark of Adam is the entire male race, whose transgressions may be redressed only in the imaginary context of women writing prolifically and well.

Chaucer is then rather powerfully complicating or even queering the patriarchal binary that Dinshaw, Hanson, Sayers, and Pearman promote. In this moment, the Wife imagines that the roles of writer and body are swapped and that instead the penis, or perhaps the entire handful between his legs, is posited against the pens of a host of angry ladies. Naturally, this is her fantasy, just as the antifeminisms that Jankin promotes are his, or perhaps those of his authors; but predictably, Alisoun’s fantasy has not yet gotten its critical due. In it, she powerfully changes not the binary itself, but rather the stasis of its categories.

As Dave Hickey writes of Robert Mapplethorpe’s X portfolio (in comparison with Shakespeare’s sonnets), the paired roles which those photos and those sonnets make possible: “speaker and spoken to, describer and described, beholder and beheld, dominant and submissive- are all spoken for.”112 The binary roles are “exhausted,” Hickey notes, and not simply because they disallow the presence of any objective reader or viewer, but also because, as in Caravaggio’s The Incredulity of St. Thomas, as, indeed, in Mapplethorpe’s Helmut and Brooks, the subject of penetration, strikingly vulnerable, is also the orchestrator

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of the scene who by his active submission controls the scenario much more powerfully than the other who penetrates him. Why should Christ allow Thomas to probe his wounds with his inquisitive finger? Why, similarly, should “the suppliant kneel and submit to having a lubricated fist shoved up his ass? And choose to have himself so portrayed?” In so doing these images implicate the viewer specifically, immediately, and viscerally: the question can never be exclusively, Why does he do it? and must always also be Why do I? “We are left asking ‘Why do I submit to this gritty, baroque image of a man’s arm disappearing into another man’s anus? And choose to speculate on it?’”

The images exert control, as do the Christ or the suppliant, as do the doubter and the Dom, as do the artist and the viewer, who chose to make this image and to view it. And yet the images were shaped, the Christ probed, the suppliant fucked, and the viewer assaulted by the very image he seeks out in an expensive coffee table book or on the walls of a gallery or museum. The binary construction does not disappear, but rather the assignation of the binary roles flows fluidly back and forth. I am always both dominant and submissive, both beholder and beheld, both punished and celebrated.

The idea is not an entirely new one; Freud famously claims in the Three Essays that the masochist is always a sadist, and vice versa. But the reflexivity of the dominant and submissive positions, in sex, as in rhetoric, has been dramatically underplayed in favor of the stability of the top-down binary by which the victim and and the perp can always

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113 Dave Hickey, The Invisible Dragon, 36.
114 Ibid.
115 “But the most remarkable feature of this perversion is that its active and passive forms are habitually found to occur together in the same individual. A person who feels pleasure in producing pain in someone else in a sexual relationship is also capable of enjoying as pleasure any pain which he may himself derive from sexual relations. A sadist is always at the same time a masochist, although the active or the passive aspect of the perversion may be the more strongly developed in him and may represent his predominant sexual activity.” Sigmund Freud, Three Essays on Sexuality (New York: Perseus Book Group, 2000): 25.
understand their respective positions. Such is the sometime case when the need to suss out and rescue the disenfranchised party trumps a potentially unsettling interest to understand a mutuality in power relations.

Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, like Caravaggio or Mapplethorpe, upholds the binary divisions of male and female, body and mind, and author and text, but reframes the binary such that the categories themselves become slippery and unstable. That is, even in the above passage, which seems to rest so solidly on the easy distinction between man, who has had the privilege of expression, and woman who, like the lion, has had to put up with being depicted, is quickly rewritten to suggest a new state in which women would be the bearers of the phallic pen, and men the feminized “mark” or cipher which their gleeful auditors will document ad infinitum. The very essence of patriarchal dominance, the “mark of Adam,” becomes for Alisoun a means to place any man, proto-Adam that he is, in the position of submissive object. Alisoun effectively imagines a penetration of the penetrating instrument.

It is vital to note that the means by which Chaucer’s Alisoun effects this rather stunning move is her rhetoric. For this reason, critical attention focused on any “real body” of Alisoun’s is essentially misguided. Alisoun’s body is simply her corpus of writings; all we have are her words and they themselves come ventriloquized through her character from a 14th century man. It is the very artistry of her portrait, the very convincing nature of her depiction, that requires that its construction be understood, and not just the thoughts, hopes, dreams, and desires of the Alisoun.

No doubt the vibrant figure of the Wife at every turn obfuscates her creation and makes her, like Ferrante’s Elena, seem truly to have been a living, breathing, embodied
woman whose body might have sustained Jankin’s blows and also received with delight his clerkly caresses. Feminist and disability scholars tend to take up, reify, and champion the “real body” of Alisoun as the very thing which can oppose and even conquer patriarchal rhetoric. Such readings take up Luce Irigaray’s hopeful theorizations that there is “always a matter that exceeds matter,” a feminine physicality that, even in Platonist terms could overcome a phallocentric privileging of form to material. For Irigaray, there is something redemptive about the act of appropriating the Platonic binary and mimicking it; through her act of mimesis, she imagines herself able to call into question the very structure by which she is make a secondary entity.\textsuperscript{116} Dinshaw employs Irigaray explicitly to understand Alisoun: “Far from being trapped within the ‘prison house’ of antifeminist discourse, the Wife of Bath... ‘convert[s] a form of subordination into an affirmation... she mimics the operations of patriarchal discourse.”\textsuperscript{117}

But, as Judith Butler asks of Irigary’s formulations: “How, then, do we understand Irigaray’s textual practice of lining up alongside Plato? To what extend does she repeat his text, not to augment its specular production, but to gross back over and through that specular mirror to a feminine “elsewhere” that must remain problematically within citation marks?”\textsuperscript{118} If, as Irigaray claims, her mimesis effects a breakdown of the Platonic hierarchy of masculine form to feminine matter, how can it simultaneously create a safe and cozy

\textsuperscript{116} I am indebted to Judith Butler’s discussion of Irigaray here: “Irigaray’s response to this exclusion of the feminine from the economy of representation is effectively to say, Fine, I don’t want to be in your economy anyway, and I’ll show you what this unintelligible receptacle can do to your system; I will not be a poor copy in your system, but I will resemble you nevertheless by miming the textual passages through which you construct your system and showing that what cannot enter it is already inside it (as its necessary outside), and I will mime and repeat the gestures of your operation until this emergence of the outside within the system calls into question its systematic closure and its pretension to be self-grounding.” Judith Butler, \textit{Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “sex”} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2100): 18.

\textsuperscript{117} Carolyn Dinshaw, \textit{Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics}, 115.

\textsuperscript{118} Judith Butler, \textit{Bodies that Matter}, 47.
feminine “elsewhere” that provides a welcome alternative to the masculine economy?

Butler articulates the problem elegantly:

This figuration of masculine reason as disembodied body is one whose imaginary morphology is crafted through the exclusion of other possible bodies. This is a materialization of reason which operates through the dematerialization of other bodies, for the feminine, strictly speaking, has no morphe, no morphology, no contour, for it is that which contributes to the contouring of things, but is itself undifferentiated, without boundary. The body that is reason dematerializes the bodies that may not properly stand for reason or its replicas, and yet this is a figure in crisis, for this body of reason is itself the phantasmatic dematerialization of masculinity, one which requires that women and slaves, children and animals be the body, perform the bodily functions, that it will not perform.

Irigaray does not always help matters here, for she fails to follow through the metonymic link between women and these Others, idealizing and appropriating the “elsewhere” as the feminine. But what is the “elsewhere” of Irigaray’s “elsewhere”?119

Irigaray, it would seem, wishes to have her cake and eat it, too. She wishes simultaneously to deconstruct the Platonic construction of metaphysical reason through the exclusion of the feminine, and also to appropriate and inhabit the “elsewhere” space which such a construction affords the feminine. Moreover, Irigaray’s privileging of the feminine “elsewhere” creates new methods of exclusions, new “elsewheres” by which the feminine recognizes itself. She cannot, as Butler points out, deconstruct and uphold the Platonic binary simultaneously.

We might ask readers of the Wife of Bath’s Prologue: how can Alisoun’s “real body” record, document, and express her feminine (or feminist) cause, while simultaneously relying exclusively on Chaucerian rhetoric? Indeed, as Pearman so aptly puts it, “her body becomes the text” on which the wrongs of the patriarchy are materially recorded. Let us stop a moment to consider the implications of this claim. Through a series of gymnastic maneuvers, the text (Chaucer’s writings) has become a body (Chaucer’s corpus) which represents another body (Alisoun’s body) that now is reimagined as a text (Alisoun’s text). Despite the insistence on the Wife’s “joly body” and its superlative importance in

119 Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter, 49.
countering violent patriarchal writing, Alisoun begins and ends as text. She must, after all. The body falls away, and essentially becomes a conduit for thought. There is no “elsewhere,” no material body that Alisoun’s readers may hold up to oppose her violent ex-husbands or her patriarchal interlocutors. There are only words, written by Chaucer, and placed in the mouth of Alisoun.

Moreover, Chaucer’s Alisoun does not use these words in order to deconstruct the binaries that her various patristic interlocutors, and their reincarnation in the form of the wife-beating Jankin, employ. As I have demonstrated, she upholds the binary constructions so familiar to Paul, Jerome, and the medieval clerk. Alisoun’s rhetorical move is arguably more exciting and certainly more interesting: she takes up the binary and cleverly demonstrates the fluidity and reflexivity of all of its constituents. She need not, therefore, attempt to set up shop in her “elsewhere,” appropriating the cast-off position an exclusionary Platonism begrudgingly leaves her. Instead, she demonstrates that the binary categories function horizontally rather than vertically, and that the fluidity by which they can be reframed, interchanged, or reflexively occupied requires the essential inclusion of all.

Alisoun’s text effectively casts her as upholding the body/text binary, but as moving seamlessly, even queerly, between the two, by causing Alisoun to disparage clerkly glossators even as she translates, edits, interprets and performs the same texts which her patristic interlocutors take up. In opposing the masculine glossator who attempts to “crowd out” the female text, Alisoun employs the same tactics as the glossators whose authority she so vehemently rejects. Alisoun’s profile is filled with both barefaced and

\[120\] “The gloss crowds out the text; the gloss becomes the text.” Carolyn Dinshaw, Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics, 121.
latent literary references, and her exegeses of Scripture and of church doctrine challenge the ideology of historical anti-feminist writers. Dinshaw reads Alisoun’s appropriation of the male glossing strategy as a mimesis that demonstrates the self-interestedness lying behind all interpretation. She claims that Alisoun “mimics patriarchal discourse...not in order to ‘thwart’ it altogether, to subvert it entirely, but to reform it, to keep it in place while making it accommodate feminine desire.”  

By this way of thinking, Alisoun’s action is less a personal choice than a political strategy: Alisoun’s greatest talent is that of imitation, and by way of imitation, Dinshaw imagines that Alisoun can carve out a space for feminine expression within the established patriarchal discourse. I claim, however, that rather than arguing like a glossator, Alisoun is a glossator herself.

Within fifteen lines of her condemnation of clerks, Alisoun has already employed two clever glosses. She first recounts Jesus’ singular visit to the wedding in Galilee, and then retells a passage from the Gospel of John that might seem to condemn multiple marriages (five in particular):

“Biside a welle, Jesus, God and man,
Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan:
‘Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes,’ quod he,
‘And that ilke man that now hath thee
Is noght thyn housbonde;’ thus seyde he certeyn.
What that he mente therby, I kan nat seyn,
But that I axe, why that the fifthe man
Was noon housbond to the Samaritan?
How manye myghte she have in mariage?
Yet herde I never tellen in myn age
Upon this nombre diffinicioun.
Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun,
But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,
God bad us for to wexe and multiplye (III 15-23).

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121 Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* 116.
Alisoun seems to posit the authority of biblical interpretation against the straightforward meaning of the words she hears. She states that this “gentil text” she can “wel understonde”: “God bad us for to wexe and multiplye.” Dinshaw contrasts Alisoun’s understanding of the simple text from Genesis to the male glossing of the Samaritan story. By this way of thinking, Alisoun engages in a kind of project that actually works against clerkly scholarship. The prototypical clerkly Augustinian way of reading is always interpretive: the secrets that dwell in the rough, enigmatic language of the Old Testament are revealed in the stories of Jesus’ life in the Gospels. Alisoun reverses the process by showing the narrative stories of Christ’s life to be much more confusing. The rules laid out in the Old Testament were comparatively simple: they were made by God, and issued directly from his lips; they required no earthly mediator. These straightforward commands, she argues, should take precedence over circuitous stories that could be interpreted many different ways. Alisoun seems, then, to align herself with the ancient axioms of the Old Testament, and sets herself in opposition to the Gospels and their interpreters.

Alisoun’s project of may subvert established modes of theological and moral scholarship, but it is by no means anti-scholastic. Alisoun inverts a textual hierarchy, but still ascribes authority to one text and prioritizes it over another. And, her favorable

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122 The adjective “gentil” and especially the noun “gentillesse” are loaded ones in Chaucer in general, but particularly in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue* and *Tale*. “Gentil” typically means “noble” or “well born” according to the glossary of the Riverside Chaucer, but Alisoun of course uses “gentillesse” in her Tale to describe nobility of character, which she delineates as a more worthy attribute than the status that comes with high birth. It may be that when she refers to Genesis as a “gentil” text, Alisoun invokes the same notion that the hag does in her speech on “gentillesse,” that is, that the best truth is the one that any well-intentioned person can understand, rather than the hidden and elite truths only known to clerks and scholars.
depiction of an almost motherly Jesus figure makes it difficult to believe that she wants to renounce the Gospel stories and their central figure.

It is useful to now turn to the Biblical text itself. In the Gospel of John, Chapter 4, Jesus is seated upon a well when a Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Jesus asks her for a drink, and then tells her that while the water she draws from the well satisfies thirst only temporarily, he can give her “living water,” which will sate her thirst forever. When the Samaritan woman asks for the living water, Jesus asks her to fetch her husband:

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\text{respondit mulier et dixit non habeo virum dicit ei Jesus bene dixisti quia non habeo virum quinque enim viros habuisti et nunc quem habes non est tuus vir hoc vere dixisti dicit ei mulier Domine video quia propheta es tu (John 4.17-19).}
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The Samaritan woman, now convinced of Jesus’ divinity, describes her experience to the Samaritan people, who begin to believe in and follow Jesus:

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\text{venite videte hominem qui dixit mihi omnia quaecumque feci numquid ipse est Christus (John 4.39).}
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This passage does not comment explicitly on multiple marriages; taken literally, the Gospel story is about the spread of Jesus’ message to non-Jewish peoples. Jesus’ words to the Samaritan woman are evidence of his perception, rather than and indication of judgment leveled against her. When the Samaritan woman denies that she has a husband, she is, in a sense, lying to Jesus, but must also actually feel that the man to whom she is married is not her true husband. Whatever her reason for stating “non habeo virum,” Jesus correctly relates the reason to her multiple marriages. When he states “bene dixisti quia non habeo virum,” he articulates the Samaritan woman’s distress at her own situation: she is in a marriage which she is does not want to describe as a marriage, even to a stranger. Jesus’ insight into the Samaritan woman’s secrets causes her to see him as a prophet, and to declare him such. Jesus’ miracle is not his knowledge of the woman’s history. He has not,
in fact, told her “all the things whatsoever that she has done.” Instead, it is his uncanny understanding of the way her mind works, and his accurate assessment of the symptomatic line “non habeo virum” that makes the woman believe Jesus to be divine.

It is worthwhile to consider the relationship between this passage and Alisoun’s preference of experience over authority. Jesus may be said to “gloss” the Samaritan woman’s words in this story. She states simply, “I have no husband,” and Jesus interprets her statement correctly as a signal of her discontent in her current marriage, and, similarly, as a signal of her discontent with her multiple marriages. In this case, an authoritative gloss does not deny the woman her voice. Its authority is rather of nurturing sort; it encourages self-recognition and expression. It is should not be surprising, then, that the Samaritan woman becomes an evangelist, and spreads the news of Jesus to all of her country-people. Far from silencing the Samaritan woman, Jesus gives her back her voice.

Alisoun does not respond to the story’s overt meaning, but to the masculine gloss that she anticipates: a condemnation of multiple marriages in general, and particularly of her own five marriages. She interprets the passage with a clerkly eye, and imagines an authoritative gloss: women must not marry more than once. She then counters this gloss with two rhetorical tactics of her own: she questions the validity of the existing gloss and then provides other Biblical passages to infuse the text with new meaning. Though Alisoun champions the pure, unadulterated text, which “itself has signifying value,” bereft of any interpretive cloaking, she does not talk about the simple meaning of the Gospel story. Instead, she imposes her readings of other Biblical texts onto the episode of the Samaritan woman; she rejects the anticipated gloss with an interpretation of her own. Alison shows
her ability to manipulate the Biblical text by “taking one passage from a text to gloss another.”

Alisoun questions the gloss that she reads into the episode of the Samaritan woman. She can see a clear injunction against five marriages, but finds no stipulated number of legitimate marriages in either text or gloss. If five is wrong, what about four? By calling attention to this loophole in the gloss, she demonstrates its fabricated and self-interested nature. She further counters the imaginary injunction with contradictory passages, also from Scripture. The first, which I have already mentioned, is the “gentil text” from Genesis that men and women should wax and multiply. Because this over-arching injunction does not specify a number of partners with whom one may carry out the waxing, Alisoun opposes edict that five husbands are too many. She supports her position with another Biblical passage that describes the young man who should leave his father and mother and take up a new home with his wife. Not only does the Bible stipulate propagation of the species, it affirms marriage as the safest and most productive way for men and women to have children. Young men and, as the Wife points out, young women, should not remain in their childhood homes, but must leave their parents in order to have families of their own. Alisoun also describes Old Testament figures Solomon, Abraham and Jacob who certainly had “wyves mo than two” (III. 57). If these holy men may have more than two wives, (many more, in the case of Solomon) why should it be immoral for Alisoun to have had five husbands?

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123 Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 308.
124 In the wake of the Plague, procreation was a particularly important concern for citizens of medieval Europe. It is worth noting, however, that though Alisoun had five husbands, she never had a child. Because Alisoun failed to produce, this particular argument would not justify her own multiple marriages.
Alisoun uses the writings of St. Paul to further affirm her right to be a wife, as many times as she chooses. Alisoun manipulates St. Paul’s dictum that while marriage is inferior to virginity, marriage will at least constrain sexual relations and save the participants from the eternal damnation that they might bring upon themselves through non-sanctioned expressions of lust.\textsuperscript{125} Alisoun allows that virginity is more privileged and more sacred than marriage, but at the same time expounds the necessity for marriage and its fruitful function.

Alisoun moves from upholding her multiple marriages to simply justifying the social condition of marriage in the first place. She justifies her position as wife with another, more playful, reference to the New Testament. Alisoun compares the hierarchy of virgins to wives to the difference between white bread and barley bread:

\begin{quote}
I nil envye no virginitee:
Lat hem be breed of pured whete-seed,
And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed.
And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle can,
Oure Lord Jesu refreshed many a man (III 142-146).\textsuperscript{126}
\end{quote}

By terming the difference between virgin and wife in relation to the parable in which Jesus miraculously fed the multitudes on bread and fishes, Alisoun deftly inverts the hierarchy she claims to uphold. While she grants virgins the purity of white bread, she aligns the nourishing power of barley bread with the loaves that Jesus distributed to satisfy thousands. Barley bread is, therefore, the more useful of the two. The service that wives provide, though \textit{theoretically} inferior to virginity, is the more necessary. Virginity and, by

\textsuperscript{125} si autem acceperis uxorem non peccasti et si nupserit virgo non peccavit tribulationem tamen carnis habebunt huiusmodi ego autem vobis parco (Corinthians 1.7).
\textsuperscript{126} The origin of this metaphor is Jerome’s \textit{Ad Jovinian}: “Just as though one were to lay it down: ‘It is good to feed on wheaten bread, and to eat the finest wheat flour,’ and yet to prevent a person pressed by hunger from devouring cow-dung, I may allow him to eat barley. Does it follow that the wheat will not have its peculiar purity, because such a one prefers barley to excrement? That is naturally good which does not admit of comparison with what is bad, and is not eclipsed because something else is preferred.”
extension, virgins themselves, are removed from the real world and relegated to the
domain of theory. Because they lack experience (the physical experience of sex and also
the socio-economic experience of being married) virgins do not have voices. They must
obey authority, they must submit to being turned into ciphers and signs, because the very
category that describes them is a theoretical category. Not so, says Alisoun, for wives.
Wives may speak for themselves, and wives may be useful to other people and to
themselves in ways that virgins can never be.

In the two glosses recounted above, Alisoun calls into question the rigid medieval
division between male and female roles in society and even in spiritual life. She describes
the Samaritan woman who, by Jerome’s interpretation, should not have married five times,
and counters the injunction (no doubt due to her nearly parallel situation) with evidence of
three patriarchs of the Christian tradition. Solomon, she jestingly comments, was
“refreshed” by his many wives as frequently as could be desired; she only wishes that she
might be as lucky.

In the second example, Alisoun uses the same verb to tell the story of the loaves and
fishes. Jesus “refreshed” the multitude with barley bread. The sexual connotation remains
attached to the barley bread, since the bread is directly compared with wives who, unlike
virgins, provide the Solomonic refreshment to their husbands. Alisoun’s description of
Solmon places woman in the philosophically inferior position: material, nurturing,
interchangeable. The singular male figure is refreshed by a countless, faceless, flood of
femininity.

Alisous shrewdly counters this paradigm with her second use of the word “refresh”: in
the second New Testament story, Jesus is the one doing the refreshing, not with his body,
but nonetheless with material food. He provides for the maintenance and even enjoyment of the body; he recognizes the needs of the body and willingly gives it sustenance. He is the nurturer here, the material succor given to the nameless sea of recipients. And, inasmuch as the feeding of the multitudes prefigures the last supper and the sacrament of the Eucharist, physical and spiritual refreshment are presented here as inextricably united.

By presenting male subjects who both refresh and are refreshed, Alisoun introduces the idea that the normative male figure is not the only possible recipient of refreshment. If men might both refresh and be refreshed, by extension women might also refresh, “And let us wyves hoten barly-breed,” and be refreshed: “A wolde God it leveful were unto me/ To be refreshed half so oft as he!” Alisoun retains her femininity and her wifeliness, but aligns herself with Solomon as well. She would like to continue her wifely duty of providing sexual gratification, but would also like to receive reciprocal gratification. If Jesus sanctioned the reciprocality of refreshment and refreshing, Alisoun must be allowed to seek both.

My reading of Alisoun, by which she not only understands and reproduces a queering of binary categories in her prose but also takes on one, and therefore, both sides of the binary herself has far-reaching implications for her character and for Chaucer’s text. First, as I have indicated already, this understanding of Alisoun undermines any reading that rests too firmly on a comprehension of her body. I have already addressed the strain of feminist disability prose that casts Alisoun as flesh-and-blood in order to investigate her wounds. Similarly, however, even Dinshaw’s later, queerer, readings of Alisoun in Getting Medieval should perhaps be revisited. While this reading of Alisoun attends to the discursive production of the body powerfully, it ultimately locates the power of Alisoun’s
narrative in her “profound normativity.” Alisoun is able to hypnotize her reader, Dinshaw suggests, and to produce a convincing body out of her discourse by excluding and discarding anything that does not fit the heteronormativity that she deems “natural.” For this reason, she must jeer at the Pardoner and ultimately cast him out of her narrative; “it is crucial that the “naturalness” of the heterosexual body be restored after the infectious influence of the queer, and thus the production of a normative, married feminine body becomes the ultimate achievement of the _Wife of Bath’s Tale._” The Wife writes out the Pardoner’s dysfunctional body and replaces it with a body that is natural and coherent.

By my reading, however, Alisoun is invested in just the reverse. She eschews stability in her narrative representation of herself historically, as well as physically, and instead privileges fluidity of self-representation and self-reinvention. In Elizabeth Taylor-esque fashion, Alisoun has rewritten herself according to the requirements and constraints of each marriage; she has played the beautiful but fractious nymphet for husbands one through three, the reveler and sex maniac for husband four, and finally the aging but wealthy mistress to the youthful Jankin. While it is true that Alisoun’s female body does not transform over the course of her narrative, nor does she seek out explicitly non-normative erotic or romantic partners (though her interactions with her gossip and her young friend might bear further investigation), Alisoun does shift from traditionally feminine medieval roles in her romantic interactions to traditionally masculine medieval roles. She begins as the seduced or bartered party; the beheld who has little interest in the “old meat” of her elder beholder; the party with negligible pecuniary holdings supported entirely by her

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wealthy protector. By the time she joins the Canterbury pilgrimage, she has successfully seduced the younger Jankin with his attractive legs and supports him through her profitable business ventures. Such a shift must, at least, undermine assertions that the Wife’s gendered normativity extends so far as her behavior; we must not claim, for instance, that her interiority is based on the feminine reclusion in the private home. Alisoun gave up the private sphere long ago, if she ever had it to begin with. As we shall see in the next chapter, the wifely domain of the “privee” is not so easily distinguished from the public functions of the home even in the more normative bourgeois home; clearly in Alisoun’s home the case would be more complicated still.

Perhaps Dinshaw does not mean that Alisoun cannot take on roles or behaviors that are gendered male, but instead joins Patterson in suggesting that whatever Alisoun’s narrative performance may be, she ultimately constructs for herself the coherent “old woman’s identity.”[^129] Her ends, if not her methods, are feminine: “once having achieved maistrye, the Wife abandons it in the interests of a larger purpose, whether it be marital harmony of the pleasure of the reader. As a wife she withdraws into gentle submission; as a speaker she replaces the complex self-promotions of her Prologue with a Tale that offers itself as pure entertainment.”[^130]

I doubt that either Alisoun’s wifely behavior or her tale can be resolved so simply. As to the first claim, Alisoun does indeed win back mastery of her home and her wealth, and then treats the perhaps undeserving Jankin to a pleasant and restful tenure as husband:

> And what that I hadde geten unto me,

[^129]: Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 310.
[^130]: Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 311.
By maistrie, al the soverayntee,
And that he sayde, “myn owene trewe wyf,
Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;
Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat’
After that day we hadden never debaat.
God helpe me so, I was to hym as kynde
As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde,
And also trewe, and so was he to me.
I prey to God, that sit in magestree (III 817-826).

And yet, this resolution does not sound so much like wifely submission as it does a reflexive arrangement by which both Jankin and Alisoun interchange or exchange the position of control; indeed, the internal rhyme of ‘he’ and ‘me’ highlight the interchangeable nature of the roles he and she hold. Both are faithful to one another, so it does not matter much who is who. Let us note that the Wife describes her behavior toward Jankin as “kynde,” that charged word that carries with it the sense of “naturalness.” What is natural about this arrangement is not its heteronormativity, nor that “proper” roles have been reestablished between husband and wife; Alisoun’s “kynde” instead reflects the natural and easy exchange of power that she and Jankin now enjoy. Ultimately the contested “maistree” that the two partners struggled over so powerfully is transposed into “magestee,” belonging to God alone, who reclines comfortably in the non-human realm.

Let us turn, then, to Patterson’s second claim, that Alisoun overwrites or blots out her Prologue with the audience-serving Tale as effectively as a scribe might scrape and reuse a manuscript of velum. Such has not been the critical reaction to Alisoun’s narrative; critical and classroom attention alike have highlighted the rich Prologue over the rather insipid and rape-y Tale. Everyone remembers the Wife of Bath; no one remembers the story she told. Nor does the company of pilgrims model such distraction for us. When the Wife concludes her tale with a curse against intractable husbands, the Friar responds to her as though she had told no tale at all but had just concluded her self-narrative; he informs
Alisoun that she need not perform as though before an intellectual community, but that she
could serve her tale-telling duty just as well by sticking to light subjects:

Ye had heer touched, also moot I thee,
In snole-matere greet difficultee.
But, dame, here as we ryde by the weye,
Us nedeth nat to spoken but of game,
And lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,
To prechyng and to scoles of clergye (III 1271-1276).

Were Patterson correct that the Wife had “replace[d] the complex self-promotions of her
Prologue with a Tale that offers itself as pure entertainment,” there would be no need for
the Friar’s scolding. He would be so tickled by the “game” of her Tale that he would have
forgotten all about her scholarly rhetoric. Instead, as we see, the Friar seems to obfuscate
the Tale and returns promptly to the Wife’s role as interlocutor with her critics. Not only
does the Friar’s response overlook the Arthurian romance in favor of the Wife’s
experiential narrative, it also highlights her role of critic as opposed to that of wife, body, or
even subject. True, he tells Alisoun that her place ought not be that of a preacher, for there
are school yards and monasteries for that sort of thing, but even his criticism demonstrates
that he takes Alisoun’s reworking of patristic theology and her interpretations of Scripture
seriously enough to deserve a rebuke.

Just as we cannot easily forget Alisoun’s self-narrative in favor of the frivolous
pleasure afforded by her tale, neither does the tale’s ending solve for us the question of the
flexibility inherent in Alisoun’s reframing of the various binaries she invests within both
narratives. To some degree, Dinsahw is right when she claims that, in the Tale, the “body
[is] transformed from foul to fair, possible now to look upon and touch because of the
husband’s duly granting “maistrie” to the wife (a “maistrie” that seems mainly to allow her
to be true to him): that is, only in the space of heterosexual relations, the binary of
masculine and feminine, can this body become speakable, tolerable, something to behold and embrace.” It is true that Chaucer’s Alisoun does not deconstruct that binary or any of its attendant iterations. As I have demonstrated, however, she does effect the transformation of any element of the binary into his fellow. For Alisoun, no one is ever “stuck” on his or her side of the binary, because the other side is equally available to him. I’d suggest then that Alisoun’s binary is not nearly as exclusionary nor as normative as it might seem. A feminized Pardoner functions within her schema, as does a masculine Pardoner, as does a Pardoner who might swap positions as often as he chooses; indeed, the Wife does not so much push him out of her narrative as make space for him in the passive role of listener while she takes on the active role of speaker. Her “Abyde” does not dismiss the Pardoner, but rather begs him to take a seat and glean what he can from her narrative; he will have his turn.

We cannot, then, imagine Alisoun’s resolution as one of having made her way through a queering forest to the sunlight of heterosexual relations, where her natural body, now perfectly female, can be touched. Rather, the change effected is that of an old woman’s body to a young woman’s body. I read this move less as an upholding of gendered norms and more of a dissatisfaction or a desire to move beyond the body altogether: “Alisoun’s own sentimentality— the flipside of her Realpolitik desire for power— appears in the old hag’s transformation, that love might free her from the pollutions and sufferings of her erotic life... Here again the Wife gives voice to a repressed Pauline longing: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?”131 In the longing for a youthful body, Alisoun and her fictional self, the so-called “old hag,” are united; by that longing, they express a renunciation of the

131 Mark Miller, *Philosophical Chaucer*, 213.
bodies they have in favor of the bodies they want, the bodies they imagine they might construct for themselves, whether by magic or by rhetoric.

I understand this desire not, as Miller would have it, as a Pauline impulse, however, and rather as an iteration of the desires communicated in Augustine. What Miller rather disparagingly terms Alisoun’s “sentimentality” might in fact be a rather powerful expression of the affective economy Augustine imagines existed in Eden and which, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, is largely transferrable to post-Edenic life on Earth.

The distinction between Paul and Augustine is not insignificant. Paul’s escatology precluded him from taking interest in complicating or making flexible the categories in which the Wife’s binaries take such vested interest. In the remaining time before the fast-approaching end of days and judgment, Paul advocated the upholding of divisions among people, including divisions of religion, class, slavery and gender. Like Irigaray, Paul would have “others,” like women, Jews, and slaves, remain in their positions as place-holders, in order to demonstrate all possible categories of human identity and be included, if only by providing an outside by which those inside are defined. Badiou writes that Paul required “women who confirm that they are women.”

Paul’s disinterest in bodies is not, then, a disinterest in the gendered categories that they establish; he remains invested in these categories. Instead, Paul’s renunciation of the body is a premature signal of readiness or acknowledgement that his body, like the bodies of everyone around him, were not long for this world and would shortly be rendered unnecessary for the faithful and the despairing alike.

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Augustine does not experience the expectation of immediate and incontrovertible change which characterized Paul’s theology. Instead, Augustine exhibited a profound ambivalence toward the elements of life on earth, of which the body was one powerful entity. In order to understand and reconcile his own anxiety, Augustine would revisit Eden to think through how life functioned. One strain of Augustinian thought sublimates the body not, as Paul would have it, into redeemed numena or fallen waste, but rather as methods for describing and understanding the complex affective relationships that could promote either happiness and fulfillment or dissatisfaction and angst. The body falls away, then, in order that Augustine may examine *amor*, *metus*, *cupiditas*, and *voluntas* more thoroughly and, especially, to understand to what degree such affects perpetuate in post-Edenic human life.

Chaucer’s Wife of Bath takes up this line of Augustinian thought and constructs not a flesh and blood body, but the body of a narrative in which she can play out some of the implications of Augustine’s thought project. If, Alisoun’s narrative suggests, bodily ambivalence functions the same way now as it did in Eden and further if the best way to understand that by renouncing the body, let us do away with the problematic roles that have given her so much trouble, beginning with the distinction of gender. Alisoun notes, however, that there is no language for expressing what life would be like for men and women with out the roles of “man” and “woman,” nor would it make much sense to tell a tale without the roles of “speaker” and “spoken to.” So, her narrative does not discard the binary entirely, but rather introduces such instability into its categories that one can never, as Paul would wish, “confirm” which side of the binary she is on. This, suggests both the *Prologue* and the *Tale*, is the method for achieving happiness; by surrendering to the
fluidity of the binary, people can exchange power freely and can enjoy the “amor” that
characterized their Edenic lives. It is, after all, the direction toward which affect turns, and
not the affect itself, that makes possible that happy life.

Of course, Chaucer’s Alisoun is constructing a fantasy, and perhaps not even one that
can work particularly well. At least, however, Alisoun’s narrative strives toward affective
fulfillment. I’ll now turn to a new kind of fantasy of married life, one which insists upon the
roles that Alisoun eschews but which nevertheless attempts to theorize a continuity
between Eden and bourgeois Parisian life.
Conduct and Continuity: Augustinian Emotions and the (Un)fallen Marriage in Le Menagier de Paris

If The Miller’s Tale and the Wife of Bath’s Prologue elaborate on and expound an Augustinian ambiguity surrounding the corruption and perfectibility of the human body, they spend less time examining the corresponding ambiguity Augustine displays toward metaphysical or psychic corruption. The Miller’s Tale centers on an investigation of the body and imagines or “invents” the body in ways that do not require a dichotomous split from the incorporeal but that also do not lean on or require monistic unity; the Wife of Bath’s Prologue examines a body constructed by textuality that upholds binary constructions but promotes an easy and fluid interchange between them. Thus far, then, we might be tempted to theorize that while Augustine and the narrative and poetic recipients of his tradition are able to posit non-normative alternatives to the status of the body in the fallen world, and to suggest a potential continuity between the perfect Edenic body and the perfectible fallen body, the metaphysical entities of the human creature are irrevocably corrupted by the fall during life on earth. Indeed, this perspective plays neatly into the medieval commonplace of Christ imagined as a second Adam, coming to restore the spiritual deficiencies first inflicted upon the human race by purchasing redemptive life after death for them. As the Pardoner declares in his enthusiastic sermon on gluttony: “O glotonye, ful of cursednesse! O cause first of oure confusioun! O origin of our dampnacioun, Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn!” (VI 498-501). The Pardoner neatly equates a bodily sin, that of greedy consumption, with its corresponding spiritual remedy, the transformation of Christ’s blood into wine, in which all the faithful may

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133 Glenn Burger, Chaucer’s Queer Nation, 34.
partake, and which can therefore save the righteous, not from spiritual deficiency on earth, but from the everlasting damnation to which that deficiency might otherwise lead.

We might, therefore, read Augustine’s lengthy meditations on the perturbations of the flesh as analogues to the attending perturbations of the psyche visited upon Adam, Eve, and their progeny. Augustine articulates the first humans’ joy in their Edenic existence not simply in physical, but also in emotional, terms:

Amor erat inperturbatus in Deum atque inter se coniugum fida et sincera societate uiuem. tium, et ex hoc amore grande gaudium, non desistente quod amabatur ad fruendum. Erat deuitatio tranquilla peccati, qua manente nullum omnino alicunde malum, quod contristaret, inruebat. An forte cupiebant prohibitum lignum ad uescendum contingere, sed mori metuebant, ac per hoc et cupiditas et metus iam tunc illos homines etiam in illo perturbabat loco? Absit ut hoc existimemus fuisse, ubi nullum erat omnino peccatum. Neque enim nullum peccatum est ea quae lex Dei prohibit concupiscere atque ab his abstinere timore poenae, non amore iustitiae (14.10).

The happy pair are here portrayed as literally “un-perturbable”; their perfect happiness stems from their proximity to and constant celebration of their love objects: God, and one another. Because the object of love or desire is always at hand, always present, the first humans suffer none of the pangs of unrequited affection, loss, or even distance from their objects. There is, therefore, no division at all between the lover and the beloved, and therefore no constitutive longing, no fragmentation of the individual. Certainly, as I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters, this unity is performed in the intimate activities of the first pair, but it is here expressed in the language of affect. Augustine conflates God and

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134 The pair lived in a partnership of unalloyed felicity: their love for God and for each other was undisturbed. This love was the source of immense gladness, since the beloved object was always at hand for their enjoyment. There was a serene avoidance of sin; as long as this continued, there was no encroachment of any kind of evil, from any quarter, to bring them sadness. Or could it have been that they desired to lay hands on the forbidden tree, so as to eat its fruit, but that they were afraid of dying? In that case both desire and fear were already disturbing them, even in that place. But never let us imagine that this should have happened where there was no sin of any kind. For it must be a sin to desire what the Law of God forbids, and to abstain merely from fear of punishment and not for love of righteousness (567).
human as indistinguishable both in the love the subject might feel (Adam's love for Eve and God; Eve's love for Adam and God) as well as the comfortable proximity of subject to object.

It might seem strange, then, that in the midst of celebrating Adam and Eve's fortuitous lifestyle and almost heavenly unity with their love objects, Augustine ruptures his ecstatic prose with the concerned question: Is it possible that the eating of the fruit was precipitated by uncomfortable and unpleasant emotions, or in Ngai's words, “ugly feelings,” already present in Eden? Despite his precipitous move to nullify the question, forbidding even the contemplation of such a state of affairs (absit ut hoc existimemus fuisse, ubi nullum erat omnino peccatum), the question nevertheless disrupts an otherwise forthright glorification of psychic peace. As William Poole puts it, “the old narrative problem is exacerbated: how can Eve desire a fruit unlawfully without feeling perturbation? How can Adam assent to Eve? There must have been a fall, perhaps some falls, before the Fall.” Poole, like RF Brown, notes that in his ambiguity on this point Augustine must allow at least the possibility that “the hard typological, single Fall must be replaced with a more protracted phenomenon.” The present chapter turns toward this possibility and examines the mechanisms by which Augustine thinks through, albeit with palpable anxiety, the functioning of such a “protracted phenomenon.”

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135 Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). Ngai places her commentary on negative emotions in relation to autonomy: “My exclusive focus... is on the negative affects that read the predicaments posed by a general state of obstructed agency with respect to other human actors or to the social as such- a dilemma I take as charged with political meaning regardless of whether the obstruction is actual or fantasized, or whether the agency obstructed is individual or collective” (3). It is worth noting that Ngai employs this term to describe the negative emotions she understands as constituents of modern or postmodern life; I propose that many of her insights are similarly applicable even to medieval and early modern text.


137 Ibid
Augustine relates the pleasure that Adam and Eve experience in Eden to their lack of what early modern thinkers would later refer to as the “passions”; because the love objects were always and everywhere available to the first humans, those humans were never distressed. Augustine’s anxious question above introduces two specific emotions that would have to have been excluded from Eden in order to secure and sustain psychic peace for the humans within, and whose presence in the garden would be enough evidence to admit the occasion, or the impending approach, of evil and sin. These are cupiditas and metus; if these two feelings were already disturbing the first humans (tunc illos homines etiam in illo perturbabat loco), they would have already and always been propelled toward disobedience and would therefore have been, from the moment of their creation, the property of sin. Augustine therefore creates a dichotomy: the humans were either in a state of complete emotional and psychic peace, engineered by their closeness to God and one another, and were therefore entirely innocent of sin up until the very moment of transgression. Or, they encountered unpleasant emotions before consuming the forbidden fruit, and therefore were created in a state of sinfulness, or at least built with a propensity for sinfulness, as even the desire to disobey is itself a transgression. In the above passage, Augustine wholeheartedly affirms the former explanation, but even in the question which he rhetorically introduces in order to overcome it, he allows for the possibility of ambiguity and invites contemplation concerning the provenance of sin in Eden. We must therefore investigate the presence of these constitutive emotions in Augustine’s imagined originary state in order to piece together the possibilities his rhetorical question calls forth.

Frank Broucek famously frames the tenets of affect theory around two pulsing centers of emotion: “Shame is to self psychology what anxiety is to ego psychology- the
keystone affect.” In the previous chapters, I employ shame in order to enter into the narcissistic machinations that construct Augustine’s fragmented bodily self that Chaucer expounds in the Miller’s Tale and the Wife of Bath’s Prologue. Now, anxiety takes the stage as we move toward Augustine’s concerns surrounding the incorporeal divisions that threaten not only the fallen creature, but even his perfected originary Edenic humans. I propose to examine two nexuses of this anxiety: the uncomfortable emotions that Augustine suggests might have plagued his first humans and compromised their security, and the unsettled, combative, and even painfully ambivalent rhetoric Augustine employs when he discusses these “ugly feelings.” I shall, then, employ the view of affect that Lawrence Grossberg articulates: “Affect is the missing term in an adequate understanding of ideology, for it offers the possibility of a ‘psychology of belief’ which would explain how and why ideologies are sometimes, and only sometimes, effective, and always to varying degrees.” Poole, Brown, Nussbaum, Pagels, and other contemporary critics or interpreters of Augustine map out Augustine’s ideologies in ways that are thoughtful, resonant, and carefully examined and articulated from a perspective that is, whether consciously or unconsciously, constrained by the conventions of analytic philosophy. I will attempt to augment their discussions by adding the missing piece of affect, and examining Augustine’s thinking through of naturalism and fragmentation by examining the emotions Augustine ascribes to his originary humans, and those emotions whose presence he abhors but whose existence he cannot effectively exclude.

Let us examine the two emotions that can, like symptoms of a disease, be investigated to explore the possibility Augustine articulates for sin's existence in an unfallen Eden. A typical translation of metus would render it “anxiety”; no such emotion should comfortably exist in an Edenic paradise in which the human creatures are unbothered by problematic feelings. However, we often see metus function as “dread” or “awe” in the Augustinian corpus, certainly not emotions that would have been out of place in Augustine's Eden, given his insistence on the first humans' utter subservience to and devotion toward God, and Eve's similar subservience to and devotion toward her husband. Metus, therefore, must be qualified in order to be deemed symptomatic of sin's intrusion into the Edenic paradise.

Moreover, Augustine’s exclusion of metus depends upon on a species of circular logic. Eden must be free of any emotions, or any indices or invocations of emotions, that could compromise the perfect serenity of the first humans. Lust might be excluded (at least in an orthodox understanding of Augustine) because it indicates the potential presence of a longing that would undo a placid state of mind. But, if we understand metus as anxiety, we simply banish it from Eden because it indicates the category of emotion which is disallowed; this syllogism will not hold. We cannot simply say, “because Eden admitted no anxiety, nothing that might indicate anxiety or perturbation could be found therein.”

I will, then, leave metus largely untouched in my discussion of Augustinian emotions, not because it is unimportant, but because it refers to the larger category of unsettling and pulsating “ugly feelings” which precipitate a generalized unease or anxiety. I shall examine, therefore, the constitutive emotions that buttress the more general metus. The most
prominent of these, and the emotion with which *metus* is most intimately aligned in the passage above, is *cupiditas*.

*Cupiditas*, is typically translated as “desire”; it of course refers to carnal desire or lust much more than the *amor* to which it is so often juxtaposed. Augustine clearly wishes to differentiate the problematic lustfulness that has no place in Eden from the devotion that characterizes the care humans feel and express for each other and for God. The idea, then, is that while a pure and devotional love must undergird human existence in Eden, any physical longing that depends upon distance or loss of an object would usher in problematic emotional perturbations that would compromise Edenic serenity and peace of mind. Moreover, such longing would not make sense in Eden, since the love object is always readily available to its desirous subject. A lust experience, then, or an analogous desire for that which one lacks, has no place in Augustine’s Eden.

The above understanding of *cupiditas* is a generally accepted totem of late medieval theology. According to it, *cupiditas* is the desire that would not have plagued the first humans, as well as the problematic lust visited on humans after their fall from grace, to further alienate them from their bodies and cause them to enact, over and over, the sin of disobedience. But, Augustine demonstrates a much more ambivalent attitude toward this particular affect and its attending consequences than is typically understood.

Indeed, Augustine employs *cupiditas* specifically as an example of how emotions function properly. In book fourteen of the *City of God*, Augustine exculpates emotions, even negative emotions, from blame. It is the human will, he says, which functions to direct emotion in any direction.

*Interest autem qualis sit voluntas hominis; quia si pe: uersa est, peruersos habebit hos motus; si autem recta est, non solum inculpabiles, uerum etiam laudabiles erunt. Voluntas est quippe in*
When the will directs emotion appropriately, that emotion is sound; when the will is a bad one, the emotion will therefore also be tainted. Importantly, the emotion itself is not the root of evil, nor is it even evil in itself. Instead, emotion exists as a kind of reservoir, to be directed by the human will. It is not morally or ethically weighted in itself.

The above passage must challenge commonly held understandings of Augustine's cupiditas. Augustine's cupiditas need not be only imagined as fallen lustfulness, and indeed must not be. Depending on the use of the will, cupiditas may be directed at anything, whether healthful or hurtful, that one desires; as Augustine follows: "Sed cum consentimus appetendo ea quae volumus, cupiditas; cum autem consentimus fruendo his que volumus, laetitia voluntas" (XIV.vi) The analogue of cupiditas in this passage is laetitia, joy; here, both desire and joy are ascribed to the motion towards, and the attainment of, what we want. Just as joy cannot be coded as sinful or wrong here, neither can desire be coded as sinful or wrong. So long as it is directed appropriately by the will, cupiditas is no danger to the human creature.

We find, then, that Augustine’s affect-based arguments require circular logic and a selective understanding of those emotions on which it is based. Emotions cannot be employed in order to distinguish an Edenic state of mind from a fallen state of mind; in fact, both are admitted into Eden under certain circumstances. To be even more explicit, the

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140 What is important here is the quality of a man's will. For if the will is perverse, the emotions will be perverse; but if it is righteous, the emotions will be not only blameless, but praiseworthy. The will is engaged in all of them; indeed, they are all no more than acts of the will. For what is desire and joy but an act of will in agreement with what we wish for? (555).

141 We use the term desire when this agreement takes the form of the pursuit of what we wish for, while joy describes our satisfaction in the attainment (556).
above understanding of Augustinian affect disallows a reader from understanding *cupiditas* as a symptom of the fall. It is the will, the *voluntas*, which directs such innocent emotions as joy, desire, or even lust or anxiety. Before the fall, *cupiditas* would have been a reservoir of affect, to be directed as the will saw fit. After the fall, it functions the same way: if directed toward the good objects of God or of another human, *cupiditas* functions just as it did in Eden. If it is directed toward some other object (the shoe of a woman rather than the woman herself, for instance), the mechanism of *cupiditas* remains unchanged, but the object is different. Augustine blames this kind of mistaken object identification on the will.

If *cupiditas* functions in precisely the same way outside of Eden than it did inside of Eden, we must suggest that at least one strain of Augustinian thought theorizes affect as an aspect of the human creature that is originary in nature and uncorrupted by original sin. It can therefore be relied upon in everyday life as a standard by which the human creature can perfect his existence, and on which he can rely in order to live in accordance with his nature. This will become particularly significant in the theorizations of sacramental and companionate marriages I undertake later on in this chapter. For now, though, it is enough simply to note that emotions are not to blame in the fall, and actually emerge relatively unscathed.

We may then blame a problematic or malfunctioning *voluntas* for the perturbations that attend the human creature. If a bad will (*voluntas mala*), specifically due to a rational turn away from God and from the other human is responsible for the primary transgression, then the bad will therefore exists both within Eden and, as the above quotation outlines, in the fallen world. The functions of *voluntas* then, like those of *cupiditas*, are essentially unchanged by the fall. The only question, which this chapter
cannot answer conclusively, is how such a state of affairs in Eden might be termed innocent at all.

Augustine attempts to preempt the question of “ugly feelings” in Eden by reframing his claims into positive, rather than negative, logic. It is not, he claims, simply that the garden expelled any problematic or upsetting affect; instead, it was in perfect obedience to God that humans manufactured their own peace of mind:

Sed oboedientia commendata est in praeccepto, quae uirtus in creatura rationali mater quodam modo est omnium custosque uirtutum; quando quidem ita facta est, ut ei subditam esse sit utile; perniciosum autem suam, non eius a quo creatu est facere uoluntatem. Hoc itaque de uno cibi genere non edendo, ubi aliorum tanta copia subiacebat, tam laeue praecuptum ad obseruandum, tam breue ad memoria retinendum, ubi praesertim nonandum uoluntati cupiditas resistebat, quod de poena transgressionis postea subsecutum est, tanto maiore iniustitia uiolatum est, quanto faciliore posset obseruantia custodiri (14.12).

Instead of explaining Adam and Eve’s paradisal joy by comparing it to affects particular to the fallen world, Augustine explains that the Edenic un-fallen humans could not but obey God, and therefore that the human’s pleasing and unperturbed state was owing specifically to his unified and orderly mind. I read the syntax above to indicate that cupiditas, already existing in the first humans, seamlessly integrated with human will, and therefore posed no emotional disturbance to him. Of course, one might suggest that cupiditas did not yet resist the will because it was not yet in existence; indeed, such would be the traditional rendering of the above. This passage on the fall, however, comes a scant six chapters after the above meditation on the emotions in which cupiditas is held up as an

142 But God’s instructions demanded obedience, and obedience is in a way the mother and guardian of all the other virtues in a rational creature, seeing that the rational creation has been so made that it is to man’s advantage to be in subjection to God, and it is calamitous for him to act according to his own will, and not to obey the will of his Creator. The injunction forbidding the eating of one kind of food, where such an abundant supply of other foods was available, was so easy to observe, so brief to remember; above all, it was given at a time when desire was not yet in opposition to the will. That opposition came later as a result of the punishment of the transgression. Therefore the unrighteousness of violating the prohibition was so much the greater, in proportion to the ease with which it could have been observed and fulfilled (571).
example of a faultless emotion whose moral valence is governed only by the will. It would
be odd, therefore, to imagine Augustine’s fourteenth book to contain two different versions
of cupiditas in such quick succession. I feel confident asserting the affective understanding
which Augustine ascribed only pages earlier, to this new formulation of cupiditas. Cupiditas
did indeed exist in Augustine’s Eden, because emotions themselves are blameless and,
moreover, are integral to convivial human life. In order for Adam and Eve to enjoy their
celebratory amor, Augustine must allow admittance to all emotions, equally blameless,
since the will and not the emotion itself dictates the emotion’s moral valence.

By my reading, the Edenic human has not yet experienced the fragmentation of what
Augustine in the Confessions refers to as the “two wills”; instead, in Eden, the two wills that
war in the fallen Augustine were unified and pursued the joyous adoration of human and
God in mutual zeal. The “two wills” are, as I demonstrated in the previous chapters, not the
will of the body and the will of the mind or soul, but instead are both incorporeal. Here,
they are referred to as voluntas that directs emotions toward good ends, and voluntas that
directs emotions toward perverse ends. In the above passage, voluntas and cupiditas are
described as being unified in purpose; this is, in fact, a bit misleading, since cupiditas never
has its own will. That is, the above passage demonstrates that the active desire to
accomplish and the affective or emotional desire to pursue the same ends and, due to their
peaceful and even symbiotic coexistence, produce the existential calm so central to
Augustine’s conception of the first humans.

We must, then, allow cupiditas admittance into even an Augustinian Eden. If we
accept that the dual workings of cupiditas and voluntas undergird the Edenic state of
existence for Adam and Eve, we must then amend our understanding of the harms of
cupiditas. It would seem that cupiditas itself is not harmful; indeed, if functioning properly, it can structure a very pleasing state of affairs. It is when cupiditas becomes an indication that voluntas are at odds with itself that we recognize ourselves to be in a fallen world. In fact, it is the uneasy frictions and fictions of the two wills leave the human creature in a shattered state of anxiety (metus) and uncertainty characteristic of his post-lapsarian environment. In Eden, cupiditas and voluntas work seamlessly toward the same end, and preempt any schism in the human creature by their integrated movement towards identical ends.

What happens, though, when the human creature directs his or her cupiditas elsewhere? Augustine takes up this question as he attempts to theorize the roots of the fall:

In occulto autem mali esse coeperunt, ut in apertam inoboeffientiam laberentur. Non enim ad malum opus perueniretur, nisi praecessisset voluntas mala. Porro malae voluntatis initium quae potuit esse nisi superbia? Initium enim omnis peccati superbia est. Quid est autem superbia nisi peruersae celsitudinis appetitus? Peruersa enim est celsitudo deserto eo, cui debet animus inhaerere, principio sibi quodam modo fieri atque esse principium. Hoc fit, cum sibi nimirum placet. Sibi uero ita placet, cum ab illo bono inmutabili deficit, quod ei magis placere debuit quam se sibi. Spontaneus autem iste defectus, quoniam, si voluntas in amore superioris inmutabilis boni, a quo inlustrabatur ut uideret et accendebat or ut amaret, stabilis permaneret, non inde ad sibi placendum aueteretur et ex hoc tenebresceret et frigesceret, ut uel illa crederet uerum dixisse serpentem, uel ille Dei mandato uxoris praeponeret voluntatem putaretque se uenialiter transgressorem esse praecipe, si vitae suae sociam non desereret etiam in societate peccati (14.13).143

143 It was in secret that the first human beings began to be evil; and the result was that they slipped into open disobedience. For they would not have arrived at the evil act if an evil will had not preceded it. Now, could anything but pride have been the start of the evil will? For ‘pride is the start of every kind of sin.’ And what is pride except a longing for a perverse kind of exaltation? For it is a perverse kind of exaltation to abandon the basis on which the mind should be firmly fixed, and to become, as it were, based on oneself, and so remain. This happens when a man is too pleased with himself: as a man is self-complacent when he deserts that changeless Good in which, rather than in himself, he ought to have found his satisfaction. This desertion is voluntary, for if the will had remained unshaken in its love of the higher changeless Good, which shed on it light to see and kindled in it fire to love, it would not have been diverted from this love to follow its own pleasure; and the will would not have been so darkened and chilled in consequence as to let the woman believe that the serpent had spoken the truth and the man to put his wife’s will above God’s commandment, and to suppose that his was a venial transgression when he refused to desert his life’s companion even though the refusal entailed companionship in sin (Ecclus. 10, 13; cf. Bk XII, 6).
Augustine implicates *voluntas* in the fall; he claims that no evil action (*malum opus*) can be carried out without an evil will (*voluntas mala*). So, something has gone awry in the affective economy laid out above. *Voluntas* has heretofore held a rather passive role in Eden; it acknowledges and celebrates a union of purposeful *cupiditas* directed toward God and toward another human and of *amor* emanating from God, which can be best absorbed and enjoyed by the human creature when his *cupiditas* is employed properly. Here, *voluntas* is not celebrating; it has gone bad somehow. We may therefore understand that *cupiditas* is no longer being directed at its proper object. This is what Augustine means when he tells us that the evil deed is preceded by *voluntas mala*. The human does not wish to do evil; rather, something has been disrupted in the affective economy that had foregrounded human tranquility.

According to Augustine above, one of the two capacities malfunctions or falls short in Eden. We will leave aside the question of whether the human creature was created with this malfunction, this predetermination for sin, or whether there was some other cause; such is not the subject of this inquiry. What we must bring to light, however, is the fact that the malfunctioning entity is not, in fact, the affective *cupiditas*, but instead the rational *voluntas*. It is the “voluntas mala” that produces the “malum opus.” Indeed, *cupiditas* is not mentioned at all, while *voluntas* turns from its sanctioned focus, God and the other human, and turns instead towards the self. Augustine terms this kind of narcissistic self-interest “superbia,” pride, or arrogance. This state of being is produced not by a mistaken feeling, but rather by a mistaken willing, a malfunctioning rational thought that turns from its object towards itself and takes a willing, rational interest in its own goals before those of its partner or of its God.
The Pardoner, then, when he quotes Timothy, is wrong by Augustinian standards. The root of evil is not cupiditas; cupiditas slinks into the background during this account of the fall, likely confused over its first break in aim with its rational comrade. It would be much more accurate to say, “radix malorum est Voluntas.” It is the rational will, and not the emotive capacity, that diverges in its adoration of God and of the other.

Cupiditas, then, may be exculpated from the blame so often ascribed to it. This is not simply a rhetorical move, but rather has far-reaching consequences for our understanding of those late antique, medieval, and early modern texts inflected by Augustinian thought. We, with our Cartesian and Kantian blinders, often look for those breeds of dualism that we assume must permeate the poetics of the medieval and early modern time period and therefore assume that the body and its incorporeal correspondent, affect, must be always depicted as depraved, fallen and indicative of the primary sins of humanity. I suggest, however, that Augustine here implicates the rational capacity much more powerfully than he does the affective capacity in the fall.

In Eden, cupiditas worked as the emotional powerhouse by which affective attention towards objects. The present chapter will explore and attempt to understand the textual tensions between fallen and unfallen theorizations of sacramental marriage and to examine its provenance and dissemination in fourteenth century texts that purport to guide human behavior through proper and improper use of the will. The authority by which Adam and Eve are held up as examples of human behavior hinges upon their unique status as the only unfallen humans. As such, they embody true and virtuous origin toward which all humans should aspire. But, they are simultaneously touted as universal parents, whose lineage links contemporary humans with the biblical and historical past. This trajectory relies upon a
strong sense of continuity between Adam and Eve in their Edenic state of originary creation, and the Adam and Eve who leave the garden, who have sex, who have children, and who foster to the human race. The question that I shall investigate and attempt to address is how these two divergent uses of Adam and Eve, which appear simultaneously in fourteenth century texts, can be compatible.

Sacramental marriage has recently garnered productive attention from medieval and early modern scholars of gender, sexuality, and queer theory, as well as sustaining the interest of philosophical and theological studies which look to iterations of marriage to understand lay piety. Though robust and diverse in their loci of inquiry as well as in their approaches, these new works, emerging in the 1990’s and gaining momentum and weight through the past decade, tend to move away from a simplistic model of medieval marriage understood primarily as a hierarchy modeled on feudal relations between a superior and his underling, and rather examine the nuanced ways in which marriages aspire toward egalitarianism and partnership, as well their potential for thinking through and perhaps reinterpreting normative desire, sexuality, and labor. Emma Lipton makes this case convincingly in her *Affections of the Mind*, claiming, "By depicting marriage as a partnership between husband and wife, the sacramental model favored a horizontal vision, and thus offered a microcosmic alternative vision for a broader social structure that works to level the hierarchy of the three estates." The term “sacramental marriage” refers, of course, to the progressive transition of marriage from a social custom to a sacrament articulated in high Church texts and controlled by Church practice; Charles Donahue, Jr.,

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David d’Avray, Shannon McShaffery, Martha Howell, and Conor McCarthy, among others, link the language and behaviors attendant upon the newly sanctified act of marriage with a rise in the interest in marital partnership, affective intimacy, and shared labor. This is not, of course, to suggest that there is a direct causal relationship between the sanctification of marriage and its production in the world of living human beings; indeed, the movement to make marriage into a sacrament may well have followed an established practice among the laity. Nevertheless, the term “sacramental marriage” refers accurately to the stylized language in which an egalitarian model for marriage is preserved and communicated to us.

In what follows, I shall employ an Augustinian understanding of affect, and particularly his depiction of cupiditas and voluntas as mechanisms whose functions remain unchanged by the fall, but whose objects do indeed shift. I shall begin by examining the shifting understanding of the fall that appears in the household manual Le Menagier de Paris. This text employs a fallen Eden in order to chastise a bad wife, and demonstrate her

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146 Rüdiger Schnell examines marriage sermons and their critiques of men, as opposed to women, in his ”The Discourse of Marriage in the Middle Ages,” Speculum 73 (1998): 771-86). Andrew Galloway also works with authorized Church language of sacramental marriage in order to understand the Wife of Bath’s Prologue: “While it is common in sermons on the marriage at Cana to assert that marriage is authoritative because it was instituted by God, Andrew Galloway has noted the innovative formulation of an early fourteenth-century German preacher, Peregrinus of Oppeln, who begins his sermon on the sacrament by commending marriage as a divinely instituted ordo superior to the other religious ordines: “the order of marriage alone has been instituted by God; happy indeed are those who have such an abbot.” While presuming a monastic model of community as foundational for the social, such a comparison nonetheless folds sexualized, mixed gender relations into the privileged realm of celibate devotional communities in intriguing ways.” See Andrew Galloway, “Marriage Sermons, Polemical Sermons, and The Wife of Bath’s Prologue: A Generic Excursus,” SAC 13 (1992): 6-7.
poorly apportioned *cupidias*, but employs an unfallen Eden in order to undergird a companionate and mutually beneficial model for marriage in which desire is seamlessly integrated into the will.

*Le Menagier de Paris* begins in the bedroom. Titled *The Good Wife's Guide* in its most recent English translation, the manual is situated within, and its advice contextualized, when the Menagier, a wealthy French member of the emergent bourgeois middle strata, and his young bride of fifteen, have retired to their marital bed. There, the inexperienced wife will learn her marital duties via a carefully orchestrated hodge-podge of day-to-day advice for dressing, spiritual guidance, exegesis of scripture, popular narratives like the Griselda tale, extensive information on raising hawks, caring for horses, and over 380 recipes.\(^{147}\)

The *Guide* resembles the patchwork manuscripts of practical and entertaining material owned in wealthier homes in which a piece of poetry might reside beside an exhortation to shine saddles properly or a recipe for saltwater fish. But, the *Good Wife's Guide* is unique and all the more engaging due to its ever-present and paradoxical narrator. The Menagier casts his household drama inside the marital bedroom, which he describes as an intimate sphere away from the prying eyes of the rest of the household and any of the couple’s associates; the young bride waits until the couple has retired to ask her husband to preserve her from shame in the eyes of others: “vous me promectiez de entendre ... en moy priant humblement en nostre lit, comme en suis recors, que pour l’amour de Dieu je ne

\(^{147}\) I refer to the narrator of the *Good Wife’s Guide* as the Menagier. In doing so, I do not mean to suggest that the author who conceived of the narrative or, indeed, the scribe who penned it, had real lived experiences that map directly onto those being described in the text. I think it unlikely, and believe that the narrator of the *Good Wife’s Guide* is a fictional figure not unlike Chaucer’s pilgrims. The question of authorial or narratorial authenticity is not, however, the object of this chapter’s inquiry. The term “menagier” refers to the husband’s management, ostensibly of his home, business and grounds, but of course also of his wife.
vous voulisse mie laidement corrigier devant la gent estrange ne devant nostre gent aussy, mais vous corrigasse chascune nuit ou de jour en jour en nostre chambre...”

The bedroom, and the bed, especially, seem to be an off-limits zone for both the “gent estrange,” outsiders, and “nostre gent,” literally “our people.” The bedroom is inscribed, first by the hopeful wife and then again in her husband’s re-articulations, as a private and a sexual sphere in which the husband and wife can engage in conversation and physical behaviors that will not be heard or observed by anyone.

And yet, from the first, a motley crew of “gent estrange” and “gent nostre” are ushered into the private bedroom via the narrative itself. The procession begins with the spectral second husband that the Menagier creates for his much younger bride (le “mari que sera”); the Menagier imagines that he will be bettering his wife not simply for his own comfort and gratification, but also for a future mate that the present husband anticipates for his younger wife, and who he is eager to impress. The Menagier therefore structures the Guide not only as a manual for his young wife, but also as a document intended to garner another man’s praise and thereby one that fosters a homosocial relationship between the two husbands who will successively enjoy the fruits of the young wife’s education. The manual addresses a number of other figures from the bourgeois household: the wife may refer her maids to the sections that pertain to cleaning, cooking, and care of the home, and her steward to those sections on farming and animal husbandry. And, of course, the disembodied reader is present as well, in whatever form he or she may come; he or she is

148 “You expressly promised to listen carefully.... beseeching me humbly in our bed, as I recall, that for the love of God I not rebuke you harshly in front of either strangers or our household, but that I admonish you each night, or on a daily basis, in our bedroom...” This translation, as all others that follow it, is taken from Greco and Roses’s recent edition. Le Menagier de Paris, The Good Wife's Guide, trans. Gina L Greco and Christine M. Rose (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009): 49. All citations following this one will cite page numbers from this edition parenthetically.
ushered in and variously expected to take on the wife’s submissive listening ear, the household staff’s practiced deftness, or the bemused pride of the “mari que sera.” The Guide therefore transgresses the boundaries of public and private that it purports to establish, demonstrating the spatial fluidity of the wealthy bourgeois household, and the shifting and slippery nature of the private and the public that such fluidity produces.149

In addition to these spectral audience members who hail from the Menagier’s quotidian life, the Menagier’s text also introduces a veritable pantheon of stock characters from Scripture, from folklore and poetry, as well as literary and historical narrative. Each one serves a didactic purpose either by positive or negative example; Griselda for instance exhibits patience, while the young wife who tests her husband’s forbearance demonstrates the value of wifely subservience and the inefficacy of trying a husband’s patience. These figures spring into the Menagier’s narrative and take their place, whether “gent nostre” or “gent estrange,” as others brought into the bedroom, and therefore into the dialectical construction of the marriage.

Of the Menagier’s textual visitors, Adam and Eve serve particularly weighty and fraught didactic purposes. Grecco and Rose root the Menagier’s authority in the gendered

149 Glenn Burger documents the fluidity of the public and private as represented in The Good Wife’s Guide, as well as the crucial consequences of this this mixing, in his “Laboring to Make the Good Wife Good”: “...The increasing importance and centrality of the lay bourgeois household as a model for urban social and economic organization across much of Europe provided another important arena in which the married estate could play a prominent signifying role. Such households were economic engines of the late medieval market economy by had neither the traditional extended family or lineage as its model nor an equivalent of the modern nuclear family. Instead the bourgeois household functioned with a husband/wife team managing apprentices, other artisanal workers, children, and servants in a business enterprise that mixed public and private in complex ways within the figural and material confines of the domestic.” Glenn Burger, “Laboring to Make the Good Wife Good in the Journees Chretiennes and Le Menagier de Paris,” Florilegium, 23 (1) (2006): 19-40, at 23. See also, Shannon McShaffrey, Martha Howell’s “The Properties of Marriage” (in Love, Marriage and Family Ties, ed. Davis, Muller, and Rees Jones), Mary S. Hartman’s The Household and the Making of History. For a discussion of marriage practices in late medieval England, see Shannon McSheffrey, Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).
differences of the Genesis 2 (Yahwist) human creation narrative. According to Genesis 2, Adam’s primacy in creation affords him arbitrary authority, and Eve, the latterly created, proves vulnerable to temptation. The Menagier, according to Greco and Rose, portrays in his book a community zealous to uncover whose wife is ‘bad,’ who shames her husband, by recounting a number of tests of wives, where husbands wager on whose wife is the most obedient (1.6.27, 33, etc.). Since scripture authorizes the ‘natural’ law of female submission to the male, the narrative excuses and even lauds husbands who try their wives, comparing them to God, who tested Adam and Eve, or Lot and his family, out of love.¹⁵⁰

The Good Wife's Guide therefore adheres to the long-standing antifeminist tradition that locates gendered difference in the Genesis account of the fall. The Menagier perpetuates Eve’s guilt and Adam’s innocence throughout his incongruous text, referencing the Eden story and the fall regularly, but especially frequently in the tract on wifely obedience. Eve serves in that section as the primary example of “wicked wife,” whose sin marks her gender universally: “par inobédience et orgueil grant mal et mauvaise conclusion vient, comme il est dit dessus de celle qui fut arse, et comme on lit en la Bible de Ève, par la désobéissance et orgueil de laquelle elle et toutes celles qui après elle sont venues et vendront, furent et ont esté par la bouche de Dieu mauldictes.”¹⁵¹ The Guide powerfully locates gender difference in Genesis origins and employs it to subjugate wives; it mines the Genesis narrative and its exegetical tradition in order to differentiate Adam from Eve and to employ this difference as the naturalistic grounds of masculine authority and feminine inferiority.

Grecco and Rose describe the Menagier’s above treatment of Adam and Eve as “heir” to John Balbi’s thirteenth century Catholicon; they contend that the narrative employs

¹⁵¹ “…through disobedience and pride occur great evil and bad outcomes, as in the case mentioned above of the woman who was burned, and as you can read in the Bible about Ève, by whose disobedience and pride she and all women who came and will come after her were and have been cursed by the mouth of God” (120).
Balbi’s theories to undergird the Menagier’s use of the Genesis text: “The wife is weak with respect to the husband (debilis respect viri mulier sub domino est) because of the guilt of Eve and not by the nature of the woman (hoc accidit ex culpa non est natura).”¹⁵² That is, Eve is blamed because she, alone, has a malfunctioning or perverse will (voluntas) which prompts her, unlike her husband, toward disallowed desire and to disallowed action. Balbi’s characterization of the fall plainly implicates Eve and exculpates Adam; it is through her sinfulness, relative to that of her husband, that Eve’s status is weakened in punishment for her greater sin, while Adam is given governance over his wife due to the lesser caliber of his transgression. Indeed, Eve is even compared to Satan in having sinned “doublement” in both disobeying God and attempting to raise herself to his equal, trying “par orgueil et que elle voult estre semblable à Dieu.”¹⁵³ According to the Menagier, Eve was originally predisposed to enjoy her body, her endeavors, and her relationship to Adam. But, after being cursed by God for her double sin, Eve’s submission took on a sourness and a sufferance that continues to characterize the wifely experience: “elle fut de tout en tout subjecte par nécessité et voulsist ou non .”¹⁵⁴ The Menagier justifies his exacting requirements of his young wife and the necessity that she obey him in all things in the origin of sin in Genesis; God’s curses against Eve and her sororal company, then, are the performative and immediately effective actions by which he transforms the nature of woman into her and their perpetual punishment.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ “she was obliged to be subject in all things, willing or not.” Le Menagier de Paris, The Good Wife’s Guide, 120.
The Menagier, then, takes his place within the lengthy and authoritative tradition which justifies masculine authority and feminine submission, and here specifically, wifely submission, in its explication of the fall. This familiar trope legitimizes a power differential, subjugation of women by men, by rooting it in human origins. Adam and Eve are indeed invoked in texts that describe and enforce proper behaviors in order to define, elaborate, and authorize the differences between men and women, the diverging philosophical, social, and cultural roles that attend each, and the employment of a rhetoric of the fall in order to assert masculine authority over feminine inferiority. Indeed, Mary Carruthers and Carolyn Dinshaw effectively relate the patristic lineage of antifeminism that relies on just such this logic, beginning with Paul, including Jerome, Tertuillian, Ambrose, among others, and extending to fourteenth century poetics.\textsuperscript{156} The Menagier marshals these figures into his service by squarely justifying the manifold manifestations of submission he requires of his wife including but not limited to her downcast eyes, her modest dress, her acquiescence to even outlandish or humiliating requests without question, and her blind eye toward any marital indiscretions by recourse to Eve’s disobedience to God and her demonstration of inferiority in her first fateful bite of the forbidden crop.

And yet, the Menagier’s rather predictable conformity with such antifeminist justifications of wifely exploitation does not comprise his only use of the Genesis creation narrative. In fact, the Menagier locates marriage as a God-given blessing in Genesis; Adam and Eve enjoy the first marriage, wholly un tarnished, productive, and good. The Menagier employs the boundaries of Edenic space and the natural goodness of marriage in order to

begin his narrative (and marriage). Indeed, at the beginning of his fifth article, he retells the
Eden story in full in order more completely to theorize and ground the intimacy that must
characterize relations between a husband and wife:

A ce que j’ay dit très amoureu.se de vostre mary, il est bien voir que tout homme doit amer et chérir
sa femme et que toute femme doit amer et servir son homme, car il est son commencement et je le
preuve. Car il est trouvé ou deuxiesme chapitre du premier livre de la Bible que l’en appelle Genesys,
que quant Dieu eust créé ciel et terre, mer et air, et toutes les choses et créatures à leur aournement
et perfection, il admena à Adam toutes les créatures qui eurent vie et il nomma chacune ainsi qu’il
luy pleut et qu’elles sont encore appelées. Mais il n’y ot créature semblable à Adam, ne convenable
pour lui faire aide et compaignie. Et pour ce dist Dieu adonc: Non est bonum hominem esse solum;
faciamus ei adiutorium simile ei. Bonne chose, dist Dieu, n’est pas que l’omme soit seul; faisons-lui
aide qui lui soit semblable. Donc meist Dieu sommel en Adam, et adonc osta une des costes de Adam
et rempli le lieu où il la prist de chair, si comme dit Moyses ou second chapitre de Genesy; Celui qui
fait Histoire sur Bible dit que Dieu prist de la char aussi avecques la coste, aussi dit Josephus, et
nostre Seigneur édifia la coste qu’il en avoit ostée en une femme; voire, ce dist l’Historieur, il lui édifia
char de la char qu’il prist avecques la coste, et os de la coste, et quant il lui ot donné vie, il l’admena à
Adam pour ce qu’il luy meist nom. Et quant Adam la regarda, il dit ainsi: Hoc nunc os ex ossibus meis
et caro de carne mea: hec vocabitur virago quoniam de viro sumpta est. Ceste chose, dist-il, est os de mes
os et char de ma char, elle sera appellée virago, c’est à dire faicte d’omme. Elle ot nom ainsi
premièrement, et après ce qu’ils orent péchié, elle ot nom Eva qui vault autant que visa. Car toutes les
créatures humaines qui puis ont eu vie et auront, sont venues d’elle. Encore adjousta Adam et dist
ainsi: Propert hoc relicquet homo, etc. Pour ceste chose laissera homme son père et sa mère et se
aherdera à sa moullier, et seront deux en une chair; c’est à dire que du sang des deux, voire de
l’omme et de la femme, sera faicte une
char ès enfans qui d’eulx naistront. Là fist donc Dieu et establi
premièrement mariaige, si comme dit l’Historieur, car il dist au conjoindre: Crescite et multiplicamini,
etc. Croissez, dist-il, et multipliez et remplez la terre.157

157 Regarding what I said about acting lovingly toward your husband, it is of course true that every man must
love and cherish his wife and that every woman must love and cherish her husband, for man is the origin of
woman. And I can prove it: for in the second chapter of the first book of the Bible, called Genesis, after God
created heaven and earth, sea and air, and all things and creatures for the adornment and perfection of
nature, He brought before Adam every living creature, and Adam named each one as he pleased by the names
they are still called. But no other being existed who was similar to Adam or suitable to be his partner and
companion. Therefore, God said: Non est bonum hominem esse solum; faciamus ei adiutorium simile ei, “It is
not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helpmeet who will be like him” Then God put Adam to sleep
and removed one of his ribs, filling the space from which He has taken it with flesh, just as Moses says in the
second chapter of Genesis. He who wrote Ystoire sur Bible says that God took flesh along the rib, and Josephus
says the same. Our Lord fashioned the rib He had taken into a woman. Indeed, according to the Istoire, He
fashioned the rib He had taken into a woman. Indeed, according to the Istoire, he fashioned flesh from the
flesh He had taken with the rib, and the bones from the rib, and when He gave her life, He led her to Adam so
that Adam might name her. When Adam looked at her he said: Hoc nunc os ex ossibus meis, at caro et carne
mea. Hec vocabitur virago, quoniam de viro sumpta est, “This one is bone from my bone and flesh from my
flesh. She will be called virago, that is, made from man.” She had that name first, and after they had sinned she
bore the name Eve, which means vita, for all human creatures who afterward has and will have life have come
from her. Furthermore, Adam added: Propert hoc relicquet homo, etc. “Thus man will leave his father and
mother and will cling to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.” That is, from the blood of both (from the man
and the woman) will be made one flesh in the children who will be born of them. God thus created her and,
from the very first, established marriage, as the historian says. For He said to unite: Crescite et multiplicamini,
The above passage, by far the longest and most detailed account of human creation in the *Guide*, is surprisingly free of antifeminism; instead it uses marriage to foster intimacy between the first humans, and continuity between an Edenic state and life outside of Eden. The *Guide*'s retelling adheres closely to the Genesis text, sliding easily between the French narrative, voiced by the Menagier, and the Latin, pulled directly from the Vulgate.

And yet, for all his adherence to the Vulgate, this retelling passes over any tragic or blameworthy fall; the fall is effectively written out of the Menagier’s longest and most detailed account of Eden. Satan is entirely absent, and the fall is narrated as a gently expected occurrence slipped sweetly into the rest of the narrative. It is neither dramatized nor mourned.

This passage, then, rather dramatically compromises the otherwise statically authoritative renderings of the Genesis story in the *Good Wife’s Guide* and their antifeminist resonances. Here, Eve is differentiated from Adam only in her childbearing capacities; it is a neutral or even positive difference. Eve does not sin alone, and does not prompt Adam to sin; it is not Eve who singlehandedly brings about a fall through pride, weakness, stupidity, or the host of characteristics that the Menagier variously attributes to her elsewhere. Instead, it is “they” who sin, together: “ils orent pechier” (emphasis mine). Because there is no dramatic fall, and no deep shift in human identity and human experience, the figure of the woman is not here set up as the agent of evil acting against her superior counterpart. Instead, the sinning is expected, it is done together; it is naturally *human*, rather than naturally feminine. Here, also, there is no singling out of Eve’s perverse *voluntas*. The peaceful and convivial relations between Adam and Eve, both before and after the fall in the
passage above, demonstrate a properly functioning voluntas that aligns action with its desire for the appropriate, and appropriately present, objects.

Perhaps in the most dramatic divergence from other authoritative accounts of the Genesis story, the Menagier creates a causal link between the fall and the generation of human life; after the fall, the nameless *virago* becomes Eve and, with her new name, she acquires and enjoys the ability to generate the human race. Here, Eve requires none of the restorative anagrammatics that supplant a failed Eva with a redemptive Ave. Nor, indeed, is her childbearing capacity a painful punishment. Instead, the “Eva” here is aligned with *vita*: Eve is touted as the life-giver who makes the human race possible. The fall, then, is constitutive of Eve’s life-giving role: it is only after the fall and the expulsion of the first humans from their Edenic home that the first woman is named “Eva,” with its generative capacities, and is able to bring about the human race by her deific fertility. The fall then, in this specific textual account of creation, is a neutral or even a positive moment: it simultaneously creates individual identity and the human ability to fulfill the God-given edict to “increase and multiply.”

The Menagier builds this new and more forgiving description of Edenic life and of a fall that, far from ruining things, actually made possible the generation of human life, in order to make the Edenic example available for incorporation into his household and into his married life. In eschewing blame and instead emphasizing the productive aspects of Adam and Eve’s union, he fosters a sense of private communion between husband and wife. The Menagier emphasizes the physical and psychological union of Adam and Eve in almost comical repetition: in addition to relating the Vulgate description of Eve being formed from Adam’s rib, the Menagier repeats the incident twice more, attributing it additionally to
Josephus and to the *Istoire*. Then, the Menagier’s text continues to document Adam’s immediate intuition that Eve comes from his own matter (*Hoc nunc os ex ossibus meis, at caro ex carne mea*) and that for this reason husband and wife will leave their respective nuclear situations and will cleave to one another, becoming one flesh. The Menagier adds in his own interpretation that just as Adam and Eve come from the same primary body, children are born out of the mingling of marital blood (*du sang des deux*). Such a comparison serves to underscore the connection between an Edenic marriage, ordained by God from the first (*là fist donc Dieu et establi premièrent mariaige…*), and the generation of children, which takes place outside the garden. If the shared flesh of Adam and Eve finds its direct representation in the shared blood that courses through their children’s veins, then the pure and good quality of marriage as established in Eden continues in marital intimacy and generation outside the garden.

The Menagier’s insistence on the point of marital unity corresponds directly with the fostered intimacy of the bedroom scene in which the Menagier opens his narrative. The Menagier effectively employs the continuity he establishes between an Edenic state and a post-Edenic marital state in order to build a private space between himself and his spouse. That is, the Mengier imagines that he and his wife can enter into or perhaps even return to an Edenic state. Just as husband and wife exclude even those closest to them (*son pere et sa mere*) when they become one flesh, the Menagier creates a space away from strangers and

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158 Following Greco and Rose: “The reference is to Petrus Comestor’s *Historia scholastica* (c. 1160), a kind of glossed Bible and biblical abridgement, characterized as “the primary text for biblical instruction in the late Middle Ages... As a work of literature, the *Historia* made the Bible, which can be very strange and intractable, into a coherent, orthodox, and entertaining narrative.” James H. Morey, “Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Bible,” *Speculum* 68, no. 1 (1993), 35. BF note that the text has no identifiable source in Petrus or in the work of his fourteenth-century translator, Guyart des Moulins; it is spelled variously *Ystoire, Histoire, Istoire, Istoria*” (94).
familiars in which both his union and the products of that union are suspended.

Significantly, the Menagier imagines this private sphere to be an Edenic sphere, one predicated upon the relationship between his 14th century world and the world described in his account of Genesis.

The Menagier, then, structures his theorization of marriage and behavior around two conflicting interpretations of the Genesis story. The Good Wife’s Guide variously toes the antifeminist patristic line, insisting on a characterization of the fall effected by a sinful Eve as a rupture that renders the human home less inhabitable and the human character and any resulting human unions less pure. But, as we see above, the text also relies on a characterization of the fall brought about by mutual and relatively innocuous sin, gently expected, unexpectedly generative, and connecting Edenic and post-Edenic states.

Adam and Eve appear as stock figures in fourteenth century medieval English texts that take as their ostensible purpose the instruction and, if necessary, the alteration of behavior as well as those which authoritatively describe sacramental marriage. Such texts include sermons, didactic performance pieces like the Corpus Christi plays, and advice books or comportment manuals, among others. Behavior modification texts,159 both spiritual and secular, depict Adam and Eve as the founders of the human race. Whether they are conscious of it or not, such a use of Adam and Eve relies upon the Augustinian conception of voluntas; texts that aim to modify behavior do so primarily in order to shape the trajectory of the human will and its affective and active results. To evoke them

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159 I employ the rather unwieldy term “behavior modification texts” here as a way of referring to literary, theological, and secular texts that articulate an attempt to guide behavior, to structure morals and ethics, and to teach proper ways of being as one of their central projects.
explicitly, or to refer to later creatures as “children of Adam” or Adam’s “offspring,” as does the *Fasciculus Morum*, a fourteenth century handbook for sermon writing, is to locate those creatures unequivocally in their humanness, and to establish a continuity between the first parents, the prophets of the Hebrew bible, the life and death of Jesus, and the current historical moment; the terms serve simultaneously as biological and historical identifier.

Additionally, for our purposes, the *Fasciculus Morum* functions as one text which foregrounds the sermons which tend to shape our understanding of medieval sacramental marriage. I shall here demonstrate how the figures of Adam and Eve and their various iterations in the text shape that text’s understanding of an ideal or perfect marriage, and also communicate the elements of that ideal union that may be transferable to medieval people. Naturally, the *Fasciculus Morum* is not the only Church text to work with Adam and Eve in this way; indeed, as Erik Kooper and Elizabeth Cooper demonstrate, Adam and Eve’s function in the early and medieval Christian debates on marriage may be traced from Augustine through much of medieval theology. I introduce the *Fasciculus Morum* here because, like the *Good Wife’s Guide*, it was a handbook, intended to aid preachers in their homilies and in their general spiritual, moral, and practical lives. Furthermore, since it is extant in twenty-eight manuscripts, we may assume the text to have been relatively

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161 The common medieval trope of Christ emerging as second Adam, and Mary a second Eve, fits neatly into this particular use of Adam and Eve as originary point of a continuously linking humanity.

popular among late fourteenth and early fifteenth century clergy in England. Its text, then, can help us approximate the kinds of normative Catholic teachings that preachers were encouraged to pass on to their flocks. We can therefore appeal to this text as an authoritative collection of the teaching that lower and middle strata Christians would hear from their parish pulpits, as well as a text designed with didactic purposes.

The *Fasciculus Morum* mobilizes Adam and Eve as the perfect naturalistic origins of the human, who become a kind of measuring stick by which contemporary men and women could be assessed. Because the first humans were created in a state of purity, they serve as bastions of human virtue; they are what the human should be, the noumenal ideal that the human can only ever asymptotically approach but which he nevertheless must strive towards and approximate as best he can. Virginity, for instance, is touted as the ideal state of the human because Adam and Eve were created in a virginal state: “virginity went with the original creation of man, for man was made from virgin soil, and Eve was created without admixture of any other matter.”163 The originary and natural state of the human is virginity, and therefore virgins are “superior to other saints” because they more closely approximate the human ideal.

Adam and Eve function not only as models for perfect human behavior, but also as embodied warnings who perform human flaws. Indeed, it is in their imperfections that the representations of the first humans provide the most useful indicators of inferiority with regard to God: their primary transgression is disobedience to God; disobedience emerges as primary sin. That is, sin itself, in its originary iteration, is essentially the breaking of rules and unwillingness or inability to adhere to authority. The *Fasciculus Morum*

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illustrates the primary sinfulness of disobedience in an allegory that compares first heaven and then the Edenic state to a monastery:

The first cloister was in heaven, where God himself was the abbot. As some inmates of that monastery revolted against him, they were condemned without home or forgiveness. The second cloister was in the earthly paradise (paradiso terrestri), from which Adam and Eve were expelled by God, the abbot of that place, because they had been disobedient and could not stay any longer but were condemned with all their offspring.¹⁶⁴

Rather charmingly, the handbook reimagines the nascent world in terms with which its audience would be intimately familiar; the allegory comparing God with the abbot and his subjects with the monks simplifies the mysterious beginnings of the universe and the expulsion from Eden for its readers by comparing them to the familial management of a monastic society.

We may note, however, how easily the narrative figuring of God's authority and the human disobedience enacted against him have been co-opted by another authority figure, here the abbot. In addition to explicating sinfulness by comparing disobedience to God with disobedience to an earthly authority, the above allegory also raises the abbot to a God-like position; any opposition to his authority is tantamount not only to the first humans’ disobedience of God's prohibition, but also to the ambition and disregard for holy order by which Lucifer fell from grace. Earthly authorities, be they of the church, as above, of the state, or of the home, are here touted as natural and good, because their superior authority compared to the inferior position of their subjects maps directly onto the imbalance of power in the nascent world, and just as disobedience is characterized as the primary sin, obedience becomes the primary method to avoid sin and retain grace. The rhetoric of the

fall was therefore available to be employed by authority figures to require and enforce submission.

Perhaps surprisingly, however, the *Fasciculus Morum* is resolute in its refusal to indict Eve for a primary role in the fall, thereby effectively breaking from the patristic paradigm.\(^{165}\) Instead, Adam and Eve are typically referenced together as joint authors of both humanity and of sinfulness. When Adam and Eve are differentiated in the *Fasciulus Morum*, the handbook takes up and builds upon Augustine’s suggestion that Adam and Eve’s sins were qualitatively different. According to Augustine, Eve was deceived by the serpent and believed his words, but Adam understood that the serpent’s terms were false and knowingly sinned in order to maintain solidarity with his wife. The difference in sins demonstrates Eve’s inferiority; Eve’s feminine wits are more easily beguiled and she sins out of stupidity, whereas Adam tragically sacrifices immortality and paradise out of marital love.\(^{166}\)

Christine de Pizan reworks Augustine’s interpretation of the differences in Adam and Eve’s contributions to the fall, claiming that Eve sinned in innocence. Eve believed the serpent’s words, and communicated them truthfully to her husband. Should Adam have understood that the serpent’s words were false and sinned anyway, his transgression

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\(^{165}\) This may be because the preacher’s handbooks focus on their male readers, and therefore wished to point out that particular subject’s propensity for sin, rather than laying out a comprehensive paradigm of sin for all people.

\(^{166}\) Augustine, *From The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (401-16): “Can we imagine that Solomon, a man of incredible wisdom, believed that there was any advantage in the worship of idols? But he was unable to resist the love of women drawing him into this evil... (3 Kgs. 11: 1-11). So it was in the case of Adam. After the woman had been seduced and had eaten of the forbidden fruit and had given Adam some to eat with her, he did not wish to make her unhappy, fearing she would waste away without his support, alienated from his affections, and that this dissension would be her death. He was not overcome by the concupiscence of the flesh...but by the sort if attachment and affection by which it often happens that we offend God while we try to keep the friendship of men... I do not think that the wiles of the serpent by which the woman was seduced could have been in any way the means of his seduction.”
would be qualitatively worse than Eve’s because he knowingly opposed the edict God gave to him, whereas Eve innocently transgressed.¹⁶⁷

The *Fasciculus Morum* seems to take a similar approach to Pizan’s, reframing Augustine’s description of the differences in Adam’s and Eve’s contributions to the fall in part as an exhortation not to follow others into sin:

> If you saw someone jump into a river and drown, I am sure no sense of fellowship would compel you to follow him. Much less then should you follow someone else into sin, if you love your soul as it should be loved by right. This excuse therefore is wrong, as was Adam’s when he wanted to blame his wife for his sin by saying, in Genesis 3, “The woman, whom you gave me to be my companion, gave it to me, and I ate.” For that excuse he was condemned to bodily death with all his offspring. If he had humbly said, “It is I who have sinned,” and so forth, as David did, and asked for forgiveness, neither he nor his offspring would have tasted death. And finally, if you were to excuse yourself before some judge by thus blaming society, what would you get? The gallows, for certain.¹⁶⁸

Like Pizan’s, the handbook’s argument places the weightier transgression squarely on Adam’s shoulders. Adam is compared to someone who, lemming-like, blindly leaps to his death after his friend’s example. The passage implies that Adam would have been foolish indeed to sin out of a sense of fellowship with, or even out of love for, Eve. The *Fasciculus Morum* does not ultimately rule on Adam’s motivation for sin. Instead, it suggests that Adam’s motivations are moot; even the noblest motives do not excuse Adam from breaking God’s edict.

In a rather startling move, the text instead claims that Adam’s worst offense was his attempt to blame Eve for his own transgression. The handbook moves even beyond Pizan’s spirited defense to suggest that it is Adam’s attempt to frame Eve for his own action, and his attendant refusal to ask for forgiveness, that causes the fall. Dramatically, this claim

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¹⁶⁷ Christine de Pizan, from *The Letter of the God of Love* (c. 1399). 10 (595). Pizan supports her claims by reminding readers that the prohibition was given by God to Adam; Eve, by contrast, learned of the prohibition from her husband. *Poems of Cupid, God of Love: Christine de Pizan’s Epistre Au Dieu D’Amours and Dit de La Rose, Thomas Hoccleve’s Letter of Cupid*, eds. Thelma S. Fenster, Mary C. Erler, and T.S. Fenster (Boston: Brill Academic Publisher, 1990).

exculpates Eve from any role whatsoever in the fall. Relatedly, and perhaps even more powerfully, this retelling of the fall also reframes the type of sin that could catastrophically send the human race from immortality to mortality. Here, the sin that causes the fall is *not* one of disobedience; had disobedience been the only transgression, Adam and Eve would have remained unfallen in Eden. Instead, the sin that causes the fall is some combination of unfair blaming and lack of repentance; these are indications of falseness and pride, rather than of disregard for authority. They also focus on Adam's inability to present himself as an autonomous individual; Adam should be able to take responsibility for his actions, rather than blaming “society” (in this case, a society of one). In this specific retelling of Genesis, the *Fasciulus Morum* articulates an individualistic alternative to a primary sin of disobedience to authority; each Christian is responsible for interpreting the commands of God for himself or herself, and is also responsible for asking for forgiveness when he or she errs. Salvation, then, is reframed as a matter of individual choice, rather than collective resurrection.

Such re-framings of the Eden story and the fall are not limited to sermons and to proto-feminist defenses. *Dives and Pauper* offers a didactic prose retelling of the Genesis origin story in a secular literary text. Written in the first decade of the fifteenth century, *Dives and Pauper* presents an exegetical dialogue between Dives, a wealthy, literate man of the world, and Pauper, a mendicant friar versed in theology as well as civil law. Dives tends to play foil to Pauper’s lessons in secular and spiritual morality; we may then understand the dialectical exchange between the two to constitute one definitive set of truths, rather than to develop two equally strong series of positions. The text’s method of inquiry emphasizes the education and evolution of the individual, as opposed to the cultivation of a
rote knowledge base that must be generally and unquestioningly accepted.\textsuperscript{169} Therefore, while Dives and Pauper is not a handbook the likes of the \textit{Good Wife's Guide} or the \textit{Fasciculus Morum}, it fits neatly into the broader genre of didactic texts.\textsuperscript{170}

I contend that \textit{Dives and Pauper} fosters an association between an individualistic and largely autonomous model for salvation and economically prescribed social mores. Tellingly, the two parties are not identified according to their behaviors, as in \textit{Mum and the Sothsegger}, nor by their professions, as in the \textit{Canterbury Tales}. Instead, they are identified by their economic positions in the world; 'Dives' refers specifically to the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 and was also used as a general term for a wealthy individual. The name 'Pauper', of course, indicates the poverty of the other figure. The dialectic that is used to establish individualistic morals via interaction with secular and church authority is also a dialectic between two divergent economic positions; it is through the interaction between wealthy worldliness and mendicant austerity that individual interpretation emerges and develops.

Let us turn, then, to Dives's and Pauper's respective takes on the fall. Dives initially indicts Eve, citing the stereotypical antifeminism that Pizan condemns as infusing the education of male children:\textsuperscript{171} “But women are the devil's snares, and tempt men so much

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Flannery} Mary C. Flannery and Katie L. Walter, \textit{Vtitirli Onknowe'?: Modes of Inquiry and the Dynamics of Interiority in Vernacular Literature}, from \textit{The Culture of Inquisition in Medieval England}, (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2013): 77-93. "In the pastoral tradition, where the goal of establishing factual truth is subordinate to the demands of casuistry and practical wisdom, texts like Dives and Pauper (C.1405) and Jacob's Well (c.1450) exemplify the ways in which the interior or hidden 'knowledge' and 'truth' about an individual were necessarily negotiated in social and information networks and between public and private spheres. They also demonstrate the ways in which imagined inquisition provides an alternative model for the self-scrutiny and subject-formation traditionally understood to have been produced and fostered in medieval confessional practices (78).
\bibitem{Clerks} Of course, many texts that do not explicitly purport to structure behavior or offer concrete advice may nevertheless be read as comportment manuals. The Romance of the Rose, for instance, with its minute descriptions of courtly behavior and bodily upkeep, is often read as a narrative that instructs on high courtship techniques.
\bibitem{Adam} “[Clerks] then give these works as elementary textbooks to their young pupils at the beginning of their schooling, to provide them with exempla and received wisdom, so that they will remember this teaching when they come of age. In their verse treatises these clerks say that Adam, David, Solomon, and countless
\end{thebibliography}
towards lechery that it is very hard to keep one's guard. Women deceived Adam and Samson, Peter, David, and Solomon: who can be safe from woman's guile?" Pauper responds that Adam's sin is vastly greater than Eve's and that, analogously, Eve's humility and repentance prompt the redemption of the human race:

Thus, since man was forbidden by God's own mouth, she only by man; and since man had less temptation than woman, and moreover would not accuse himself or admit guilt but attributed the fault to woman and to God, therefore he sinned more than woman, for woman admitted her guilt yet asked no mercy. Offering no such excuse, she largely admitted her guilt by saying 'The serpent has deceived me.' In that she acknowledged that she was deceived, she acknowledged that she had done wrong and unwisely and contrary to what she ought to have done. And because woman abased herself and acknowledged her lack of wisdom and folly, God at that juncture placed hope for our salvation in woman, when He said to the serpent: "I shall put enmity between you and woman and between your seed and her seed, and she shall crush your head." (Gen. 3:15)

Here, as in the Fasciculus Morum, the traditional understanding of the fall as an act of disobedience is mitigated by the strength of individual repentance. Though Eve is not blameless, she is indeed much more innocent than Adam. Relatedly, she, unlike Adam, recognizes her wrongdoing and recants without foisting the blame off onto someone else. This, Pauper claims, is the primary reason that redemption, symbolized by the crushing of the serpent-devil's head, may be claimed by humans at all; Eve's humility and repentance secure the promise of race and resurrection.

The above passage compromises the legitimacy of multiple power differentials that were traditionally upheld by the emphasis on submission that emerged from an understanding of the fall primarily as an act of disobedience. First, rote theology is discarded in favor of one's own reading and interpretation of the text. Second, female inferiority to masculine superiority is found to be centered on a false premise; if anyone

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other men were brought down by women morning, noon, and night. Is there therefore a man alive who would be able to protect himself from them?" From The Letter of the God of Love, 280.

174 Such an interpretation forwards the hypothesis that Dives and Pauper articulates Wycliffite teachings.
emerges as morally and spiritually superior here, it is Eve, not Adam. Finally, poverty is aligned with feminine virtue and individual interpretation, while wealth is associated with thoughtless proselytizing and ill-founded masculine preeminence. It is no coincidence that Eve’s side is taken up and ardently defended her by the renouncer of worldly goods who consciously chooses to destabilize the power differentials that infuse both feudalism and an emergent proto-capitalism in which excessive wealth can quite literally buy status. Pauper speaks as one who condemns the arbitrary authorities of masculinity and of wealth in the same breath.

Both the Fasciculus Morum and Dives and Pauper articulate and then eschew traditionally gendered explanation of the fall in favor of more egalitarian interpretations. The Fasciculus Morum, overtly, and Dives and Pauper, via dialogic synthesis, reinterpret Genesis and reframe the first sin as individual failing rather than disobedience to authority, thereby rendering gender differences between Adam and Eve inconsequential or, at least, rendering gendered roles in the fall dramatically different from those established by patristic theory. Interestingly, Dives and Pauper associates an egalitarian gendered politics with an egalitarian economic politics, contending that just as Eve was no more (and was likely less) to blame for the fall than Adam, a poor man is equally virtuous as (or vastly more virtuous than) a wealthy man.

It is tempting to suggest that the Fasciculus Morum and Dives and Pauper employ the language of gender difference and dramatically compromise the familiar trope of feminine insufficiency and sinfulness in the face of masculine completeness and power in order to compromise the distinctions between social classes and allow for more egalitarian relationships between members of divergent populations. It is equally tempting to claim
that these texts appropriate the language of class strife, brought to the forefront of the 14th century social and political consciousness, in order to mobilize egalitarian gender politics. Both of these hypotheses, one with a proto-Marxist agenda and another engaging in proto-feminism, compromise the complexity of the original texts. I suggest that in addition to these rich readings, didactic texts employ a defense of femininity and a defense of poverty in order symbiotically to theorize continuity and the expansive potential of a return to origin.

The mutually beneficial relationship between an economically egalitarian Eden and a characterization of the fall that does not scapegoat Eve also undergirds the Menagier’s lengthy retelling of the Genesis story. Tellingly, the Menagier locates his most defamatory passages on Eve in the sixth article, which focuses on the obedience to one’s husband: “dit que vous soiez humble et obeisant a celluy qui sera vostre mary.” His exculpatory passage, which diminishes both Eve’s culpability and the fall’s general calamitousness is located in the preceding article, which Grecco and Rose have titled “Devotion to Your Husband.” The article begins with an exhortation to the wife regarding her affective responsibilities, and the actions they should elicit:

Le quint article de la première distinction dit que vous devez estre très amoureuse et très privée de vostre mary par dessus toutes autres créatures vivans, moiennement amoureuse et privée de vos bons et prochains parens charnels et parens de vostre mary, très estrangement privée de tous autres hommes.

The Menagier exhorts his young wife to be especially loving and “privée” with him:

Grecco and Rose render “privée” as “intimate” and, indeed, the combination of an

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175 This article tells you to be humble and obedient to the one who will be your future husband (104).
176 The 5th article of the first section enlightens you about your obligation to be especially loving and intimate with your husband above all other living creatures. Be moderately affectionate and close toward your and your husband’s nearest blood relatives, but distant from all other men (94).
affectionate and loving regard and an eschewing of other young men, particularly those
dandies whom the *Menagier* particularly despises, does indeed indicate the private
relationship characterized by intimacy. This private-ness is extended to the members of the
Menagier’s family; his young bride is encouraged to also be “amoureuse et privée” with
them, though the intensifying “très” is reserved for the Menagier only; the intimacy, then, is
an intimacy of the household. Indeed, the term “privée,” while signaling the intimate
private-ness of the home, might also be rendered something like “domestic.” It is the same
descriptor that the Menagier employs to distinguish wild animals from tame ones:

> Ores avez-vous veu moult de divers et estranges exemples dont les derrains sont vrais et visibles à
l’ueil par lesquels exemples vous véez que les oiseaulx du ciel et les bestes privées et sauvages et
mesmes les bestes ravissables ont ce sens de parfaictement amer et este privées de leurs patrons et
bienfaisans et estranges des autres; doncques, par meilleure et plus forte raison, les femmes à qui
Dieu a donné sens naturel, et sont razonnables, doivent avoir à leurs maris parfaicte et solemnelle
amour, et pour ce je vous prye que vous soyez très amoureuse et très privée de vostre mary qui
sera.\(^{177}\)

We might overlook this doubled use of “privée” as a simple coincidence, were it not
employed pointedly in this passage to refer, in the same breath, to both the domestic
animal and also to the loving and intimate wife.\(^{178}\) This repetition requires a more complete
understanding of what the Menagier is getting at when he requires his young bride to be
“privée” in her treatment of him. Of course, the wife is often unflatteringly compared with
obedient animals that fawn over their masters even when mistreated. But, this passage
associates the quality of devotion in his wife’s treatment of him with the qualities of a tame

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\(^{177}\) Now you have seen many diverse and odd examples, true enough to be noticed with your own eyes. By
these examples you observe that birds of the sky and beasts, tame or wild, and even predatory beasts have
the sagacity to love completely and be friendly with their owners and benefactors, keeping their distance
from others. So much more should women, with God-given sense and reason, have perfect and solemn love
for their husbands. Accordingly, I beseech you to be especially loving and intimate with your future husband
(103).

\(^{178}\) The two interconnected uses of “privée” are similarly connected earlier in article 5: j’ai dit que vous devez
estre très privée et très amoureuse de vostre mary, je mets un exemple rural que mesmes les
oiseaulx ramoses et les bestes privées et sauvages...”
animal. The tame animal is the one who subscribes to a certain private-ness; it is not simply
tame in that it will not bite, but rather it is domesticated, it is of a household. Private-ness,
then, does not mean exclusivity of behavior, or even intimacy, exactly; it instead refers to a
kind of dedication to the household. The “privée” wife is the one who prioritizes the duties
of her household over other, stranger, duties or desires. My reading distinguishes between
the idea of privacy and the idea of intimacy. The “privée” wife here cultivates a household
intimacy, rather than sequestering herself in a solitary privacy.

The tenor of the private-ness that the Menagier employs to describe his young wife
might not, then, be the jealous jailing of a domineering husband nor is it the intimate
interiority, whether real or imaginary, of the female domestic sphere. Rather, the
Menagier’s “privée” swells expansively to include anyone who might safely be assumed
part of this household: servants, family members, business associates, friends, colleagues,
members of the clergy, and so on. The Menagier employs the term “privee” as a kind of
invisible, permeable, and mutable boundary that cordons off his home interests, the
domain of his household, all of which pivot on the role of his young wife.179

Lee Patterson famously argues for the distinction between private and public, where
the public is the sphere of the bustling mercantile world outside the home, where identity
can be meaningfully signified by occupation. The private, correspondingly, is variously the
sphere of the domestic, the necessity of amour, and the locus of subjectivity. Patterson
divides the public and private on gendered lines such that the woman, by virtue of her
exclusion from the public world, is therefore the custodian of inner life: “If women were

179 My reading of the Menagier’s “privée” is deeply indebted to conversations with Glenn Burger and to Wan
Chuan Kao’s “Conduct Shameful and Unshameful in the Franklin’s Tale.” Wan-Chuan Kao, “Conduct Shameful
denied social definition, did this not mean that the realm of the asocial -- of the internal, the individual, the subjective -- was peculiarly theirs? Men, as befitted historical beings, has social responsibilities; women, as befitted the socially invisible, has private lives. Men had careers; women have characters."\textsuperscript{180}

The Menagier’s “privée” wife clearly does not function so neatly as a simultaneously domestic and subjective being who stands in constitutive opposition to her husband’s public persona. Such a paradigm would require a divide between the public and private in the Menagier’s home, as well as much more indication of the correspondence between patriarchal confinement and the blooming of robust character. Instead, I suggest that the Menagier’s young bride functions as an interface between the public and private; she resides in neither, but rather is constantly newly constructing the private by her engagement with it. Like a dynamic eruv wire, her presence and her attentions serve to build and rebuild a \textit{privée} community.

It is perhaps significant that much of the public-private divide is intimately connected to the economic welfare of the Menagier’s household. Instead of maintaining, as Patterson does in his reading of Chaucer, “sharp distinction” between the “public world of trade” and the “private world of domesticity,” the Menagier’s text locates the success and failure of trade within the domestic household. As Glenn Burger has persuasively argued, the 14\textsuperscript{th} century urban home was often the locale of choice for meeting and cultivating acquaintance with business colleagues. Trade likely took place within the home, with good and services being exchanged there. Additionally, the merchant or other bourgeois professional’s household might have functions as a showroom of sorts; his prosperity, his

\textsuperscript{180} Lee Patterson, \textit{Chaucer and the Subject of History}, 282.
comfort, and his material goods would be signs of his effectiveness in negotiation and his success in his endeavors.

At the nexus of professional security, then, is the wife. It is she who maintains the home, who entertains the clients, guests, business associates and others who are brought to her door, and also she who potentially negotiates some of the business. Importantly, she herself is an integral component of demonstrating the worth and respectability of her spouse and of her household’s business. Her dress, her manner, and her ability to arrange everything from a proper bedroom to an elegant dinner, are therefore assets to the household trade. By this reading, the Good Wife’s Guide may be read not simply as a confining behavior modification treatise, but also as an instruction manual for a highly valued partner.

The above is not a particularly novel critique, and the Patterson text I interrogate has long been subject to rethinking and re-articulation. What has not heretofore been noticed or clearly articulated, however, is the way in which readings of the fall in didactic texts interact with the tenuous and dynamic distinctions between public and private and, especially, with their uncomfortable coexistence. The Menagier’s text provides a particularly apt example of the symbiosis of a public/private paradigm with a fallen/unfallen paradigm. In addition to interfacing between the public and private, the Menagier’s young wife is established in his text as an interface between a harmonious and egalitarian Edenic marriage and a fallen marriage in which the wife suffers cruel and arbitrary submission to her dominant husband.

As I have noted above, the most rigorously antifeminist readings of Genesis that the Menagier employs are located in his passages on wifely obedience. Theoretically, then,
wifely obedience is exacted from the young bride by virtue of her larger stake in the fall. Through Eve’s sinfulness, all women are significantly lost; female submission to male dominance then hinges on the fallen nature of the world in which the Menagier and his young bride live and attempt to comport themselves well.

Most of the Menagier’s behavior modification exhortations involve, in some way, the wife’s functioning as a public face for household operations. She must dress herself tidily in materials that are respectable but not ostentatious; she must engage with her husband’s acquaintance respectfully but eschew all others; she must run an economically sound household that has the ability to produce feasts the like of which were served at court, but which regularly provided wholesome and inexpensive sustenance to its members; indeed, even her prayers are directed towards the further prosperity of the physical, as well as the spiritual, self. I suggest that the fallen world that the Menagier must imagine in order to enforce the arbitrary submission of his young bride, is therefore aligned with the public world. The sinful wife who obeys her more perfect husband is also the public wife who demonstrates (and even advertises) both her husband and her household’s saliency through demure and proper conduct.

As we have seen, the Menagier also gives a dramatically different reading of the Genesis creation tale in his section on wifely devotion. In this retelling, the Menagier effectively elides life in Eden and the marriage contract established therein with a historical present. Here, both humans sin, but the sin is more generative than disruptive. Just as the public is aligned with the fallen world, here the private or intimate sphere is aligned with the unfallen world. The Menagier roots wifely devotion in his theorization of a sacramental marriage in which each partner is equally esteemed and each partner’s contribution,
though perhaps different in form, is equally valued. The naturalistic state of marriage he imagines in this section is therefore rooted in its Edenic origin and is imagined to persist unchanged into the present day. In order to embody proper devotion, then, the young wife must remain essentially unfallen, and must live in a world that has much more in common with Eden than it diverges from it.

As we know from our critique of Patterson, the public and private do not exist in statically separated states, but rather intersect messily and sometimes are virtually indistinguishable. Fallen and unfallen states are similarly messy; they reside alongside one another, shift subtly back and forth, and sometimes are impossible to distinguish from one another. A sense of continuity between an Edenic past and a historical present, then, is at least as significant to the Menagier’s didactic project as a fall.

The Menagier’s young wife is peculiarly significant in these oscillations between the fallen and unfallen states. We may claim, then, that she is neither categorically fallen nor unfallen herself. Instead, she interfaces with and at times even embodies the fluid transitions between Edenic and post-lapsarian marital states. The wife’s behavior can be employed as a kind of litmus test to determine when and how the Menagier’s characterization of marriage and of the marital household shifts between fallen and unfallen. When the wife’s role becomes hard to parse or difficult to decipher, we may there locate a moment in which the fallen and unfallen spheres collide.

One such moment occurs early-on within the troubling and oddly narcissistic series of references the Menagier makes toward “l’e mari que sera,” the future husband he imagines his young bride will take after his demise. The Menagier frames his advice, and particularly that advice which might seem particularly troublesome, harsh, or overly
directed toward his needs over those of his spouse as not actually intended to benefit himself; he is far too humble and undeserving of the excellent treatment he nevertheless exacts from his spouse. Instead, however, he suggests that the behaviors he teaches will eventually be employed to serve a far better husband than he. He is, he claims, training wheels for his youthful wife, and the experience he will give her in all marital matters will allow her to hone her pleasing techniques and then employ them later in life to satisfy a more deserving partner.\textsuperscript{181} The wife and, to a certain extent, her husband, project the importance of her marital faithfulness and skill forward in time, when these qualities will presumably help the young wife to attain a desirable second husband and will also help her to hold his attention and affection.\textsuperscript{182}

Our bride, then, seems to inhabit both a present and a future sphere at once. Her present is undeniably imperfect. Like the young Alisoun of Bath, she has been wed to a much older and likely unexciting partner, whom she is instructed to obey, and service, and with whom she must cultivate intimacy. She is also unpracticed in her duties; she has never managed a household, and seems to have had an indifferent domestic education. Though not instructed to give over her girlish pursuits entirely, she may find she has little time for gathering flowers and dancing in between overseeing the cleaning, cooking, and entertaining of the household, instructing her household staff, and attending to her husband’s business and personal needs. The young wife’s unceremonious banishment from childhood and her new and growing responsibilities are shown to be undesirable, even

\textsuperscript{181} This passage may call to mind the Wife of Bath’s humorous pronouncement that she has had the benefit of five husband’s “schooling,” and who, like clerks who become more learned from various styles of education, becomes more perfect with each new lesson.

\textsuperscript{182} In this way, the Menagier’s text resembles comportment manuals such as the \textit{Book of the Knight of the Tour Landry}, which train daughters to attract and keep a husband.
unhappy. Her life then appears to be post-lapsarian; her simultaneous comforts and torments are memories of what has been, and hopes of what is to come.

The fallen nature of the young wife’s marital life is emphasized by the public nature of the Menagier’s engagement with “le mari que sera.” This future husband haunts the narrative like a ghost, observing even the most shameful, personal moments that the Menagier and his young wife might experience. The young bride and her behavior, especially, are imagined to be constantly on display for this spectral figure who, like Griselda’s Walter, is always squinting narrowly at her from behind a curtain or through a keyhole, hoping to catch her in an indiscretion or an outburst of disallowed feeling. Nothing, no matter how private, can be shielded from the eyes of the “mari que sera,” who observes her even when awakened from sleep and judges the quality of her drowsy prayer. Privacy, then, along with its Edenic associations, seems to be entirely absent from the young wife’s existence.

And yet, the “mari que sera” does not simply represent an oppressive set of observing eyes. He also, to some degree, represents the reward the young wife will receive for going through the arduous and sometimes upsetting tasks she is being faced with now. He, in her imagination, must be a younger, richer, and more exciting partner than the rather stodgy and certainly much older Menagier. This future husband, however judgmental, will be the one who receives and cherishes a perfected wife, and who will engage in an egalitarian partnership with her that is even more intimate and even more fulfilling than the one the Menagier can offer. We must agree that any virtue the Menagier attributes to his own union with the young bride will be exponentially augmented in the superior union she will form with this superior husband. The devotion, therefore, that fosters subjective
intimacy between the two and effaces qualitative differences in their roles will therefore be carried over and even increased in the young wife’s second marriage.

The Menagier’s emphasis on and reference to “le mari que sera” indicates his intention that the same tenets of wifely obedience and devotion that he teaches his young bride are effectively transferable to another partner. The sacramental marriage that he establishes, then, not only relies on the theory of Edenic continuity to a historical present, but also allows for the continuity of an egalitarian marital state from one union, with one particular husband, to a second union with a second, different, husband. The wifely devotion that the young bride will cultivate, and the intimité privée that accompanies it, will therefore become more perfect, not less, as the young bride learns her role in the household and becomes more adept in her behaviors. The promise of the Menagier’s text seems to be a promise encouraged by the dangling carrot of continuity: paradoxically, by enduring her training in obedience, the young wife is promised the eventual reward of an egalitarian and loving union.

The young bride is the instrument of continuity here, the conduit between her current union with the Menagier, and her future happiness with “le mari que sera.” She may also be considered a conduit of affect or, perhaps more specifically, of a kind of masculinity, embodied both by the superior future husband and her solicitous present one. That is, in his comportment materials, the Menagier courts the attention and praise of her future husband, engaging in the erotic Pandarus-esque intermediary work of wife-training that seems to have as much to do with his interest in the future husband as in his present wife. The young bride, in bridging a fallen state and an Edenic one, also engages in the project of equating the socially aspirational bourgeois Menagier, who is below her in rank
(though perhaps more wealthy in material goods), with the imaginary nobility of her future husband. They are, after all, both her husbands.
Three’s a Crowd: Gender Trouble in *The Franklin’s Tale*

The Menagier’s uncomfortable triumvirate through which he shunts his marital theorizations from himself to his young wife and then to her future husband evokes the love triangles which structure affective relationships in the 14th century romance and Briton lai. Of particular interest in this category is Chaucer’s *Franklin’s Tale*, which establishes a similarly problematic affective circuit between Dorigen, Arveragus, and Aurelius. As many an undergraduate will attest, while Dorigen’s happy husband and unhappy lover belong to different social classes and are differentiated between one another in many ways, their alliterative and quarto-syllabic names establish, from the first, some manner of association between the them, and their mutual desire for Dorigen unites them even further. I shall propose, then, to investigate this odd triangle and join the debate currently percolating among Chaucer scholars on the success or failure of sacramental marriage in *The Franklin’s Tale*.

14th century representations of sacramental marriage have, in recent years, been thought to model egalitarian social relationships in literature, as well as in theological and social texts. Cathy Hume reads Chaucer through the theorization of emergent marital constructions in her *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage*, and Emma Lipton, as we have already noted, suggests that the ideology of partnership that acknowledges difference but does not build irrevocable hierarchies based upon it is established by sacramental marriage and can migrate successfully to male-male social relationships. Lipton’s theorization of the transfer and eventual co-option of marriage to broader social relationships finds fertile ground in her reading of Chaucer’s *Franklin’s Tale*. As in the Menagier’s text, a young wife becomes a conduit for homosocial relationships between
men; the narrative of the Franklin’s Tale opens on a happy marriage, and closes with the
knight, the squire, and the clerk all demonstrating the “freedom” to be gentlemen. The
tale’s trajectory indicates that the mutually pleasing egalitarianism Dorigen and Arveragus
enjoy provides an example of behavior that Arveragus, Aurelius, and the magician-clerk
integrate into their dealings with one another.

Lipton claims that Dorigen and Arveragus’s sacramental marriage is predicated
upon the classical construction of friendship. This marriage, itself a horizontal, egalitarian,
relationship, is then employed by the Franklin as a model by which to break down the
strata separating the knight, the squire and the clerk. Dorigen’s convenient excision from
the narrative’s ending allows for the cooption of the classical friendship construction by
men of disparate social and economic positions: “This exchange of marriage ideology
among men becomes the basis for the idea that people of different social classes have equal
claims to gentillesse.”

It is certainly true that the narrative trajectory of the Franklin’s Tale moves from
happy marital state to the possibility of equality among men of disparate classes. Dorigen’s
excision from the narrative, though, is difficult to reconcile with Lipton’s theory when we
take into account Arveragus’s threats to remove her physically from the world: “I yow
forbade, up peyne of deeth, That never... To no wight tell thou of this aventure...” (V 1481-
1483, emphasis mine). Arveragus’s violent death threat is too severe to be wished away by
a theory of marital bliss co-opted by egalitarian social relationships. Indeed, Arveragus’s
threats do not coincide with Dorigen’s removal by chance. I therefore suggest that the

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Franklin’s Tale necessitates an alternative theory for Dorigen’s excision in order that a reader may understand and accept the narrative’s construction of homosocial relations as functional.

W. C. Kao has taken up both Arveragus’s death threat, and Dorigen’s theorization of herself as “a future dead person”\(^\text{184}\) when she contemplates suicide, in order to place the violence threatened against Dorigen in the context of the Franklin’s complex maneuvers between public and private. Shame is the affective interface by which the public and private are constantly and dialectically constructed over the course of the Franklin’s narrative, and it is fear of shame, Kao asserts, that motivates Arveragus’s death threat and the self-threats that Dorigen makes. Shame, then, indicates not the convivial functioning of a successful companionate marriage, but instead “exposes the very ambiguities of companionate marriage” and emphasizes the condition of the nuptial agreement, the provision against public shaming, that “enforces inequalities” between Dorigen and Arveragus.\(^\text{185}\)

It is also the complex functioning of shame that, according to Kao, allows for the homosocial bonding of Arveragus and Aurelius: “The two men, who never meet in person, are connected through a woman, or more specifically, through the shaming of a woman.”\(^\text{186}\)

We cannot then claim that a successful classical friendship between Arveragus and Dorigen is the primary paradigm by which Arveragus, Aurelius, and the magician-clerk establish horizontal relationships. By Kao’s account, and Lipton’s as well, it is the failure, not the success, of Dorigen and Arveragus’s friendship that effects that first bond between knight


\(^{185}\) Ibid.

\(^{186}\) Wan-Chuan Kao, “Conduct Shameful and Unshameful in The Franklin's Tale,” 119.
and squire, and sets the chain of potential gentilesse and its accompanying egalitarianism in motion. Dorigen’s excision from the narrative indicates a violence and an inequality that deeply undermines any successful classical friendship between herself and her spouse.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that a classical model of friendship does not function properly as a sustainable model for marital relations. The authoritative classical paradigm for friendship in the central 14th century theology and philosophy of Britain and France comes largely, as Lipton rightly asserts, from Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, as well as its various co-options and retellings. Equality, Aristotle claims, in things both tangible and intangible, in physical possessions and in abstract qualities, is of primary importance in the construction of a perfect friendship, and equality was not possible between men and women. Indeed, Aristotle rather definitively marks marriage as an imperfect form of friendship based precisely on the inequality between the husband and wife:

But there is another kind of friendship, viz. that which involves an inequality between the parties, e.g. that of father to son and in general of elder to younger, that of man to wife and in general that of ruler to subject. And these friendships differ also from each other; for it is not the same that exists between parents and children and between rulers and subjects, nor is even that of father to son the same as that of son to father, nor that of husband to wife the same as that of wife to husband. For the virtue and the function of each of these is different, and so are the reasons for which they love; the love and the friendship are therefore different also. Each party, then, neither gets the same from the other, nor ought to seek it; but when children render to parents what they ought to render to those who brought them into the world, and parents render what they should to their children, the friendship of such persons will be abiding and excellent. In all friendships implying inequality the love also should be proportional, i.e. the better should be more loved than he loves, and so should the more useful....

187 “But equality does not seem to take the same form in acts of justice and in friendship; for in acts of justice what is equal in the primary sense is that which is in proportion to merit, while quantitative equality is secondary, but in friendship quantitative equality is primary and proportion to merit secondary. This becomes clear if there is a great interval in respect of virtue or vice or wealth or anything else between the parties; for then they are no longer friends, and do not even expect to be so.” Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics

188 Aristotle here describes marriage in heteronormative terms. Marriage, for Aristotle, is between men and women. It is important to note, however, that Aristotle does not claim that the physical union between husband and wife enhances their form of friendship, as does Aquinas. Aristotle was of course acquainted with male-male relationships that involved intellectual, social, and physical or sexual intimacy.

189 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 7.
We may, then, more accurately read Aristotle to say that while husbands and wives can both be virtuous, they are virtuous differently. Married partners may certainly participate in a friendship, but it is not a perfect friendship. Instead, it is a friendship by which each party adheres to his or her own role, excels at his or her own particular system of ethics, but, significantly, does not participate in the same system as his or her spouse or exalt the other by mutual achievement of the same kind of virtue. This condition is absolutely required for perfect friendship, and perfect friendship then could only be between men, and between men who were similar to one another:

Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good—and goodness is an enduring thing... But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent; for such men are rare.  

If perfect friendships are friendships between men, we might wonder why Dorigen is included in the narrative of the Franklin’s Tale at all. If, ultimately, the Tale demonstrates the possibility of horizontal social relationships between a knight, a squire, and a clerk, could not this project be effectively undertaken without reference to a marriage at all? Certainly the stories of male-male friendship such as those appearing in Plato, Plutarch, Herodotus, Virgil, and Augustine, as well as the copious models in Anglo-Saxon poetry, the chanson de geste, and the romance tradition must be thought to be viable candidates for Aristotelian friendship paradigms which would avoid the cumbersome side-stepping of our dramatic Dorigen.

And yet, as I have demonstrated above, Aristotle no more allows for perfect friendships among men of disparate social standing than he does for perfect friendships

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190 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 3.
between married men and women. Despite the manifold examples from classical and medieval literary traditions of male-male friendships, few if any construct horizontal relationships among members of disparate classes. Or, in other words, few if any of these male-male relationships employ Aristotle’s theorization of the perfect friendship in order to construct either a friendship or an equivalence between two men of divergent social standing. There is, therefore, something special about the narrative trajectory of the *Franklin’s Tale*; the companionate relationship between Arveragus and Dorigen must be necessary in order to effect the homosocial egalitarianism that the narrative constructs. This companionate relationship cannot be characterized as a successful classical friendship, and as I have demonstrated, its use cannot yield successful horizontal relationships among men. Shame clearly plays a role in Arveragus and Aurelius’s abstract bonding, but Dorigen’s potential shame is not powerful enough to construct the equal claim to gentilesse that the knight, the squire, and the clerk share at the end of the narrative; male relations predicated upon female shame may begin the process, but female shame exists throughout the Chaucerian corpus without powerfully creating egalitarian bonds between socially stratified men. What is it, then, about Dorigen and Arveragus’s union that allows for what seems increasingly like an improbable construction of horizontal relations among men?

I claim that Dorigen and Arveragus’s union, like that of the Menagier and his young bride, is built upon an oscillation between an egalitarian devotion that is born of an unfallen Edenic marital state, and an exacting of obedience that comes from the artificial and arbitrary constructions effected in the wake of the fall. That is, Dorigen and Arveragus constantly slide back and forth between imagining their marriage as one that functions like
Adam and Eve’s divinely ordained union in an Edenic state, and imagining their marriage as a polity that must be maintained by rigorous adherence to the laws of the fallen world.¹⁹¹ It is specifically the first of these states, the imagined continuity with the Edenic state and the historical present, that the Franklin’s Tale employs to theorize horizontal, egalitarian relations between the knight, the clerk, and the squire. In a world that is relatively like Eden, men and women can enjoy companionate sacramental marriages and all men have equal claim to virtue.

Kittredge famously celebrates the Franklin’s Tale’s union as the ideal fusion of a chivalric paradigm of love with the medieval model of hierarchical marriage.¹⁹² By the first, the masculine lover must obey his feminine object, and by the latter, the wife must obey her divinely authorized husband. Dorigen and Arveragus each promise to obey the other; each therefore claims to adhere to the paradigm by which he or she is submissive to the other’s rule. For Kittredge, as for others who absorb and articulate his critical legacy, the simultaneity of both a courtly love relationship and a patriarchal marriage in Dorigen and Arveragus’s union enables the only equitable, healthy, and loving married state in the Canterbury Tales. The Franklin employs what Kittredge terms a “brilliant success” of a marriage to effectively requite the preceding problematic accounts of husband and wives.

¹⁹¹ When Arveragus and Dorigen adhere to the former paradigm, the Edenic world overlaps with their own.¹⁹² “It was the regular theory of the Middle Ages that the highest type of chivalric love was incompatible with marriage, since marriage brings in mastery, and mastery and love cannot abide together. This view the Franklin boldly challenges. Love can be consistent with marriage, he declares. Indeed, without love (and perfect gentle love) marriage is sure to be a failure. The difficulty about mastery vanishes when mutual love and forbearance are made the guiding principles of the relation between husband and wife. The soundness of the Franklin’s theory, he declares, is proved by his tale. For the marriage of Arveragus and Dorigen was a brilliant success.” George Lyman Kittredge, “Chaucer’s Discussion of Marriage,” published online at http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/canttales/franklin/marriage.html.
Let us examine Dorigen’s and Arveragus’s respective articulations of their marital positions. Their agreement is not simply agreed upon as the conditions most likely to yield convivial marital bliss, but also emerges as the organic result of their affective responses.

Arveragus swears first:

That nevere in all his lyf he, day ne nyght,
Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie
Agayn hir wyl, ne kithe hire jalousie
But hire obeye, and folwe hir wyl in al,
As any lovere to his lady shal (V 746-750).

The courtly quality of Arveragus’s spontaneous declaration hinges upon the terms “lovere” and “lady”; indeed, Arveragus proposes to forgo title of “housbonde” or “lord,” which Dorigen has proffered him, and instead assumes the submission inherent in being her “lovere.” He suggests, therefore, that his role in their interactions will not change after their marriage, but that he will woo her as though she were still the object of his courtship, and will continue to “labour”\(^{193}\) and undertake “greet emprise” for her. That is, Arveragus refuses the transformative process of marriage and instead adheres to his chivalric role. In this paradigm, his lady is his absolute sovereign who requires his absolute obedience.

Dorigen, on the other hand, refuses to perform the role of beneficent and omnipotent sovereign, but instead insists upon her own submission in the husband-headed marital paradigm. She says as much to Arveragus:

Sire, sith of youre gentillesse
Ye profre me to have so large a reyne,
Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us tweyne
As in my gilt, were outher werre or stryf
Sire, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf (V 754-758).

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\(^{193}\) “Labour” is used here to describe marital travail, as opposed to the unflattering “swynke” employed by the Wife of Bath.
Dorigen parrots the Wife of Bath’s Loathly Lady, pledging herself to be “humble”, submissive to her husband’s rule, “true,” faithful, and devoted.

For Kittredge, these mutual declarations of servitude propose not only a theoretical but a practical model for successful marriage: “This, then, is the Franklin’s solution to the whole puzzle of matrimony, and is a solution that depends on love and gentilesse on both sides... it is [according to the Franklin] the only arrangement which will ever enable two persons to live in love and amity.”

Kittredge employs a mathematical equivalence by which two vertical power structures, each an inversion of the other, seem to cancel each other out and leave instead a leveled horizontal amour. If Arveragus is servant in love and lord in marriage, and Dorigen is servant in marriage and sovereign in love, Kittredge suggests, the corresponding dominant and submissive positions are nullified, and the two hierarchies fade away and are replaced by mutual care, respect, and friendship.

Certainly, Dorigen and Arveragus’s union suggests a much happier alternative to the careless relations in the fabliaux, the Wife of Bath’s painfully transactional early marriages and physically abusive fifth, the Clerk’s monstrous pairing of Walter and Griselda, or the ill-conceived match between January and May in the Merchant’s Tale.

Chaucer’s more nuanced treatments of Dorigen and Arveragus’s companionate marriage that I have recounted above, however, focus not on the efficacy of this celebrated marriage, but rather on its failure to function properly. Dorigen and Arveragus’s marriage does not gain its egalitarian quality from the fusion of courtly love and patriarchal marriage.

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194 Kittredge, “Chaucer’s Discussion of Marriage.”
http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/canttales/franklin/marriage.html
paradigms; the uncomfortable coexistence of the two models serves rather to destabilize and complicate the union.

We may first look to the very paradigms upon which Kittredge builds his case in order to locate the preliminary arbitrary inequities of Dorigen and Arveragus’s union. Both paradigms are, as I have demonstrated above, vertical power structures. In the first, Dorigen holds power and authority, while Arveragus serves her. In the second, Arveragus rules, while Dorigen humbly obeys him. I contend that these hierarchies cannot, and do not, dissolve easily.

We need only look to the sticky wicket of Arveragus’s arbitrary requirement that he retain the “name of soveraynetee” to see the first failure of the proposed egalitarianism. Arveragus’s caveat to his otherwise categorical promise of courtly submission is, of course, that he appear to be the ruler of his marriage by staking claim to the title of sovereign. In so doing, Arveragus builds a performative boundary between an intimate realm in which he and Dorigen are sole inhabitants and can structure their relations by their own world, and a peopled world filled with men and women of various rank and status and who will observe the new couple closely.

Let us first examine this latter realm, in which Arveragus wishes to retain the “name of soverayntee.” This is a world that is defined by distinctions between people. Arveragus’s very use of the term “name” evokes the primary and largely arbitrary distinctions by which we are first differentiated from one another. The very act of naming in Genesis serves to distinguish Adam from the other animals; not only does he differ by name, but he alone is given a dominion that itself is demonstrated through his naming task. Naming, then, bears
with it a legislative and even prohibitive valence.\(^{195}\) Arveragus’s insistence on being named sovereign, then, may also be read as an insistence on retaining an arbitrary privilege to distinguish some beings from others.

This world is definitively a fallen realm. As we have seen in the Menagier’s text, an insistence on wifely obedience to husbandly authority rests not on the egalitarian Edenic state, but rather on readings of the fall by which Eve’s punishment for her first sin is her unwilling subjection to her husband’s rule. The name of sovereign is placed upon Adam at that time; Arveragus here clothes himself with the hierarchical vestiges bequeathed upon him by the fall.

The divisions Arveragus concerns himself with, as well as the arbitrary indications of superiority and inferiority, can only be located in a public world peopled with more individuals than a proto-Adam and his proto-Eve. It is a world of commercial, political, and social hierarchy, and therefore rests upon distinctions in the quality of human beings. Indeed, the Franklin’s rationale for Arveragus’s insistence on sovereignty follows: “That wolde he have for shame of his degree” (emphasis mine). Arveragus casts himself within this world of arbitrary distinctions, and requires his own status marker in order that he may fit into the hierarchy of other “named” beings in as lofty a position as possible. Arveragus’s “degree” is his position among the other inhabitants of this public world, his identifier among them, exactly as Chaucer the poet employs the term in order to introduce each pilgrim and relate them to one another in the General Prologue.\(^ {196}\) Arveragus imagines

\(^{195}\) Lacan fleshes out this theory in his seminar The Psychoses, in which he equates “nom” with “non” as it relates to the role of the father; the father’s “no” is equivalent to the name (“nom”) of the father. Jacques Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Psychoses (New York: WW Norton and Company, 1997).

\(^{196}\) “And which they weren, and of what degree” (I 40).
a world in which his behavior toward his wife and her behavior toward him impact his standing in the public hierarchies of men. Dorigen’s obedience to her husband’s sovereignty constitutes Arveragus’s identifiers, as well as his ability to identify.

The antithesis of a top-down power structure wherein Arveragus demands titular superiority is not a top-down power structure wherein Dorigen rules in lofty supremacy over her subject husband. Instead, the alternative is a horizontal egalitarian structure in which each serves the other and neither claims higher footing. This egalitarianism is, I believe, what Lipton articulates in her term “married friendship.” But such friendship cannot be born of the “separate but equal” interchange that Aristotle articulates in his theorization of heterosexual marriage, nor can it be rendered by some nebulous simultaneity of conflicting hierarchies, as Kittredge would have it. Instead, the model for an egalitarian polity of two is, unsurprisingly, Edenic.

In a 14th century imagined Eden, as we have seen in the Fasciulus Morum, in Dives and Pauper, and in the Menagier’s sections on devotion, gendered hierarchies do not exist. An unfallen Eden is, then, the primary model for a marriage in which “freendes everych oother moot obeye.” Arveragus and Dorigen are both servants to one another in love, but as the Franklin points out, such serving elevates, rather than diminishes, them. Of the individual who is patient in love, the Franklin notes, “He is at his avantage al above.” The egalitarian relationship that Arveragus and Dorigen practice whenever Arveragus need not don his title allows both Arveragus and Dorigen to simultaneously have the “avantage”; they need not compete with one another for supremacy, but instead need only rise, in tandem, to thoughtful dignity in order to be considered simultaneously superior.
Superior, then, to whom? John Wyclif takes up this question in his commentary on
an originary Edenic state in the *De statu innocentiae*, a work which aside from a thorough
study by Alastair Minnis in *Wycliffite Controversies*, has received negligible critical attention
in the literary sphere.\(^\text{197}\) Despite his controversial standing as the head of the Lollard
dissention, Wyclif’s account is “is quite typical” of the “literal picture of the Garden of Eden
in the later Middle Ages” and Alastair Minnis takes Wyclif as his guide to “mainstream
thought about paradise” in his most recent monograph that traces late medieval imaginings
of paradisal spaces.\(^\text{198}\) The *De statu innocentiae* is an appendix to his *Tractatus de mandatis
divinis*; unlike many other Wycliffite texts, the *Tractatus* and its appendices are considered
with reasonable certainty to have been penned by Wyclif himself. In the *Tractatus*, Wyclif
locates just authority as the province of God, and theorizes the different ways in which just
power may be disseminated among and employed by human beings. Wyclif is unusual
among late medieval theologian in that he grounds his theories of political and
ecclesiastical justice and lordship squarely in his metaphysics.\(^\text{199}\) The *De statu innocentiae*
is Wyclif’s tract on Eden; in it he describes human origins in order to more

\(^{197}\) Alastair Minnis, “Wyclif’s Eden: Sex, Death and Dominion” in *Wycliffite Controversies*, ed. Mishtooni Bose

\(^{198}\) Alastair Minnis, *From Eden to Eternity: Creations of Paradise in the Later Middle Ages*. (Philadelphia:

\(^{199}\) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wyclif-political/#2. “The central idea of Wyclif’s political philosophy is that the *dominium* defining God’s primary relation to creation justifies all human *dominium*, whether it be the mastery of a king, a lesser civil lord, or a priest. But unlike predecessors who were content to define God’s mastery as foundational to human lordship in non-metaphysical terms, Wyclif made ready use of his realist ontology to argue that God’s *dominium* functions as a universal by causality for all instances of just human *dominium*. For medieval political theorists, this was not common practice; some, like Aquinas, can be argued to present unified systems of metaphysics, political thought, and ecclesiology, but many others, including Ockham, Marsilius of Padua, John of Paris, and Giles of Rome, did not. If, like Ockham or Giles, they had metaphysical positions, it is impossible to argue persuasively that their ontologies affected their politics. This makes Wyclif’s political and ecclesiological thought notable, for it is one of the few cases where a distinguished metaphysician used his ontology as a foundation for a detailed examination of the just arrangement of authority in church and state.”
comprehensively understand and communicate the way in which divine authority was
given to human beings, and how humans justly deployed that God-given authority in a
perfect state.\textsuperscript{200}

\textit{De statu innocentiae} is a moderately comprehensive description of Adam and Eve’s
life in Eden that toes an Augustinian line.\textsuperscript{201} The text, however, becomes much more
exciting in its divergences (or perhaps reworkings) of Augustinianism. Wyclif, unlike
Augustine, makes no mention of gendered differences in Edenic behavior in general, or in
causation of the fall. In fact, Adam and Eve are never actually named; they are simply
referred to together in general terms such as the human race (\textit{genus humanum}) and the
first parents (\textit{primi parentis}). Indeed, it is the entire human race that sins; the first sin is not
relegated to individuals, but assumed from the first as the provenance of all.\textsuperscript{202} Augustine’s
theorization of feminine debility as probative origin of sin is therefore entirely absent from
Wyclif’s theorizations. It is as though gendered difference itself does not exist in Wyclif’s
Eden. For him, one of the elements of Edenic perfection is the sanguine homogeneity of the
first humans.

Private property, too, would not have existed in an Edenic state. At first, this seems
to be a purely practical matter; Wyclif points out that the mechanical arts and all kinds of

\textsuperscript{200} It is worth pointing out here that, like Augustine, Wyclif engages in a thought experiment by which he imagines what kind of life the first humans would have led during an extended stay in Eden. He is not articulating what he believes to be the historical state of Eden during their actual stay; that was much too short a time for the first humans to exhibit all of the physical and societal behaviors that Wyclif attributes to them. Instead, the Eden he describes is the state he believes would have existed had there been no fall.

\textsuperscript{201} Adam and Eve enjoy perfect digestion, a healthful vegetarian diet unmotivated by discomforting hunger, uninterrupted slumber punctuated by prophetic dreams, physical exercise without exhaustion, and unparalleled mental acuity. Moreover, as in Augustine, the shame associated with nudity and the autonomy of the sex organs during passionate arousal were absent from Edenic life.

craftsmanship would have been out of place in Eden, because nothing constructed would have been necessary. Clothing functions as a particularly powerful example: because nakedness was not accompanied by shame, the artificial construction of clothing was unnecessary and would only have hindered Edenic life. Seemingly, then, because there were no products of labor, there was no conception of private property. Ownership seems to be inherently tied to the projects of construction.

Wyclif does not leave the discussion here, however, because the theoretical element of dominion, as given by God to humans, still requires an explanation. Wyclif expands his definition of property to include all elements of the nascent world, but especially focuses on the animal kingdom; the first humans, he claims, would use every part of the world, and this use would necessitate their ownership of that world.²⁰³ Importantly, however, humans do not achieve dominion simply by virtue of their humanity, but rather by virtue of their justice.²⁰⁴ In Eden, the first humans would have all been just; therefore all property would have been communal property. No human would have had cause to claim any more, or reason to be denied less, of the world, and since nothing was made by man, and all was made by God, no human could lay claim to any particular object or collection of objects.²⁰⁵ For our purposes, however, communal property undergirds Wyclif’s conception of Edenic society in general. For Wyclif, Eden is essentially an aristocracy made up entirely of

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²⁰³ “Ex quibus plane patet quod innocens utitur qualibet parte mundi...” Johannis Wyclif, De statu innocencie, 507.
²⁰⁴ “Ex patet quod iustus laudans Deum meritorie in istis transitoriis habet de eis ut sic utilem usum fructus; ex quo patet quod iusti sunt Omnia, et per consequens omnis iustus et colus huiusmodi est realiter vere dives” Johannis Wyclif, De statu innocencie, 508.
²⁰⁵ This theory becomes increasingly important to western political thought, as it is employed at the basis for Wyclif’s belief that a just monarch should control resources instead of a corrupt clergy.
aristocrats. All humans in Eden would have been equally just, and therefore equally entitled to the manifold privileges afforded them by the paradisal garden. Significantly, Wyclif departs from both Augustine’s and Aquinas’s Edenic theories here. Both Augustine and Aquinas agreed that while man held dominion over the natural world, those humans with superior abilities would exercise their virtues in a peaceable dominion over their fellow man, looking over the affairs of plants, animals, and humans out of a kind of convivial duty. Just as Wyclif does not comment on gendered difference in his Eden, he similarly passes over the question of whether humans in Eden would have varied in terms of their talents and intelligence. What is certain, however, is that regardless of any elements of heterogeneity, all humans in Eden would have been entirely equal in rank and in possession of the earth.

According to Wyclif, then, Dorigen and Arvergus need not be superior to anyone in order to be, in themselves, superior. They are, as Lahey puts it, part of an aristocracy (in this case, of two) made up solely of aristocrats. Each is “gentil,” each is “free,” and each interests himself in his fellow’s concerns without those relations being tinged by arbitrary dominance or subservience. Dorigen and Arveragus, like the Menagier and his young bride, oscillate between a marriage defined, on the one hand, by fallen divisiveness, and, on the other, by Edenic egalitarianism.

The Franklin’s Tale takes up a question that the Menagier’s text hints at but ultimately leaves unanswered. What happens when these two paradigms of marriage

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206 Steven Lahey comments effectively on this idea: “From the outside looking in the society connected with Natural dominium seems like an aristocracy, but because secular lordships entail coerced commoners, Natural dominium cannot really be an aristocracy, because there are no commoners, no coercion, and most importantly, no sin. If everyone is an aristocrat, it is hard to label the society an aristocracy.” Steven Lahey, Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 163.

collide? Which prevails? The Menagier is able to build his text with only moderate inconsistency because he cordons off the fallen and unfallen moments of marriage into categories. When obedience is of primary importance, the Menagier subscribes to a fallen paradigm of marriage, which he imagines taking place in a public sphere filled with hierarchies and close observers. When devotion takes primacy, he slips into the unfallen marriage narrative, in which he and his bride are subsumed into the intimate and private Edenic realm. The Franklin’s narrative attempts to establish just these boundaries, as I have shown above, in order to construct an ideology of marriage that oscillates between fallen and unfallen governing paradigms. But, his narrative moves directly to the moment of crisis in which the two paradigms collide and such shaky boundaries prove ineffectual.

Let us now turn to that moment of crisis, in which the rules that govern the fallen, public marital plan and the unfallen, private blueprint become confused and mix. Having finally been coaxed out of her solitary sorrows by well-meaning friends, Dorigen attends an early spring dance in a sumptuous garden where she encounters the love-lorn Aurelius and makes her strange jest. We might imagine that this garden would subscribe to the conditions of the locus amoenus typical of courtly love poetry and the romance tradition and, indeed, at first glance it appears to be just another such space:

\[
\text{And this was on the sixte morwe of May,} \\
\text{Which May hadde peynted with his softe shoures} \\
\text{This gardyn ful of leves and of floures;} \\
\text{And craft of mannes hand so curiously} \\
\text{Arrayed hadde this gardyn, trewely,} \\
\text{That nevere was ther gardyn of swich prys} \\
\text{But if it were the verray paradys.} \\
\text{The odour of floures and the freshe sighte} \\
\text{Wolde han maked any herte lighte (V 906-614).}
\]

The season is early May, past the first coupling of birds, but perfectly suited for outdoor amorous encounters. The grounds are brightly colored with plants in their first bloom, and
so abundant that they seem to fill the whole garden. Not only does the garden incorporate the “fresshe sighte” of the “leves and of floures,” but also the “odour of floures,” which beguile the olfactory as well as the visual senses. It seems to be this combination of appeals to the senses that cause the narrator to describe this praiseworthy garden as a “verray paradys.” In the direct term “paradise,” as well as in its luscious naturalism, the garden appears here to be another Eden, unfallen and perfect.

The paradisal garden functions as such a potent analogue for personal contentment and liberty precisely because of its unmanufactured and pristine naturalism. Indeed, the fairy Otherworld and the transformative woodland spaces of the romance are so special not in their categorical removal from the world of men, but in their return to the essence of the natural world; in this originary state lies the power of the perfect natural space to reorient the hero toward a suitable goal or object, as well as to augment his ability to experience, understand, and employ the dream, vision, or other encounter with the transcendent.

And yet, the very actions that this passage employs to describe the Edenic beauty of the garden are compromised by reference to art and artifice. The garden does not come by its vibrant colors organically, but rather is “peynted” by the soft showers of May. This innocuous reference to human handiwork yields further, more troubling accounts of human intrusion: the “craft of mannes hand” takes credit for the delicate and pleasing

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208 The OED gives the first definition of paradise as: “The abode of Adam and Eve before the Fall in the biblical account of Creation, the Garden of Eden.” The second definition indicates that paradise also refers to the Judeo-Christian heaven.

209 Indeed, we know from Mark Miller’s convincing arguments on naturalism in Chaucer that, for the most part, Chaucer is uninterested in simple representations of normative perfection, however appealing, but rather focuses on the potential of that “naturalism of exceptional force and vitality” to express “a picture of persons’ relations to themselves and others.” Mark Miller, Philosophical Chaucer, 39-40.
arrangement of the garden. The flowers that meet in complementary gaiety have been pre-selected for color and odor, so as to rationally and almost manipulatively evoke the paradise the poet describes.

The originary Edenic quality of the garden is therefore seamlessly integrated into a passage on human handicraft and cultivation. In fact, the two are inseparable; without the thoughtful and creative horticultural work of human hands, the garden could not replicate and bring to mind the paradise it represents. That is, in order to appear like a quintessentially natural garden, the Eden garden, this garden must be thoroughly planned, carefully tended, and maintained rigorously. It achieves its naturalistic effect only through craft and curation.

For Wyclif, such a theorization is impossible. Craft cannot exist in an Edenic space, because craft compromises Eden’s potential for egalitarian relations among all men. When men have belongings, status is introduced into the garden. When men have different skills, their differences usher in a hierarchy among the inhabitants that ultimately makes for a ruler or group of rulers whose skills in general are more sophisticated, or perhaps whose special skills are in governing others. Therefore, in order to imagine his aristocracy of aristocrats all, Wyclif must exile all art, all craft, all business, and even all difference in skill, from his Eden. The question, then, which remains and which the Franklin’s Tale attempts to answer, is: what does a Wycliffian Eden make of gendered difference? Can gender, like class or ability, be effectively excluded from this theoretical Eden, or does its necessary presence remain and disallow the convivial aristocracy which otherwise might exist among men?

Chaucer here mobilizes a theorization of Eden like Wyclif’s, but consciously violates its terms. He therefore creates a paradisal garden that is both fallen and unfallen
simultaneously. The garden appears to its human inhabitants to be a “verray paradise”; its naturalism is phenomenologically communicated to all who enter it, including Dorigen and Aurelius. But, because it includes and in fact relies constitutively on human craft, the garden is also a fallen garden, and therefore a product of the historical world.

It is my contention that, in its simultaneously fallen and unfallen state, the garden provides a rich representational stage upon which the uncomfortable coexistence of fallen and unfallen marital paradigms will be performed and examined. Up until this moment, despite Arveragus’s arbitrary requirement for a face-saving sovereignty, and perhaps owing in no small part to his perpetual absence, Dorigen and Arveragus’s union has functioned shakily, oscillating successfully between the private Edenic sphere of equals and the public fallen sphere of arbitrary hierarchies. This garden, however, indicates that the fallen and unfallen may not be unbound so easily. Dorigen’s ill-fated jest, which takes place inside the garden, functions as a turning point by which these uncomfortably separated sets of rules for different settings become complicated and confused. Dorigen’s unfortunate joke may be assimilated into an understanding of the garden as unfallen or Edenic and, similarly, into a reading of the garden as post-lapsarian; in each case, the boundaries she and Arveragus have built between public and private, as between fallen and unfallen, cease to work properly.

Let us follow the first possibility for reading Dorigen’s joke. If we imagine the garden to be an unfallen Edenic space, Dorigen’s response to Aurelius’s piteous whining maps neatly onto Eve’s mistaken bite of apple. Dorigen, like Eve, encounters her tempter alone and unguarded. Moreover, Aurelius comes to Dorigen under cover, as it were, of being her neighbor, and naturally wishing to converse with her; the serpent cohabitates with the first
humans and therefore was not likely to be shunned. Aurelius, like the serpent, voices his desire, which is of course a prohibited action, and one which would render Dorigen an untrue wife and a wife cast out of the paradise, tenuous though it may be, of their mutually established marital intimacy.

Aurelius begs Dorigen to have pity on his pain: “Madame, reweth upon my peynes smerte.” Pity, we know, is a great impetus to action among Chaucer's women; Hipolyta and Emily, as well as Criseyde, engage in transformative pity that can cause them to fall in love, to change their minds about how they wish to run their lives, and even to recommend political policy. Dorigen is certainly not immune to the effects of pity; it is due to just such affective workings that she entertained Arveragus’s courtship in the first place and entered into their binding marital contract. In this way, Aurelius appeals to an emotion he knows to be fully developed and active in Dorigen. We may similarly understand Eve’s temptation by the serpent as appealing to a desire that she may already have cultivated; the prohibition of the tree and the inequity between Eve and Adam, as well as between Eve and God, primed her for the serpent’s argument.210

We may, however, acknowledge, that, like Troilus’s ailment, Aurelius’s suffering is sexual in nature, and requires a sexual cure. At least, this is how Dorigen and Arveragus understand his words. Though Dorigen is not a virgin, she is a chaste wife, and were she to accept the sexual advances of this young squire, she would indeed consider herself “untrewe”; she vows therefore never to do so either in “word or werk,” in speech or in

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210 John Rogers makes this case convincingly for Milton’s Eve: “Eve’s response to the structural incoherence of the special government of Eden before the fall naturally proves her undoing... Milton, driven to explain Eve's transgression even at the expense of his conviction of her absolute freedom, is nonetheless willing to expose the intrinsically unstable foundation of Eden's hierarchical society.” John Rogers, “Transported Touch: the fruit of marriage in Paradise Lost” in Milton and Gender, ed. Catherine Ginelli Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 129-130.
deed. Though not overt, the serpent’s trickery of Eve in Eden is tinged similarly with sexuality. The male serpent’s phallic shape, which Milton emphasizes, is enough to serve as innuendo, and the manifold medieval associations with Satan and lust or sexuality serve to bind the two scenes even more closely. Aurelius is, therefore, a quasi-Satanic figure, entering the enclosed garden and lulling Dorigen into a false sense of conversational security, before assaulting her with declarations of love and exhortations of pity.

So, if Dorigen’s playful comment that she will grant Aurelius her love if he removes all the rocks from Brittany’s shores is to be understood as a primary transgression in an unfallen, Edenic state, it is then the transgression that ushers the fall into the tale. Dorigen and Arveragus have enjoyed an intimacy built around the Edenic egalitarianism of mutual obedience; in one fell swoop, Dorigen breaks that state and decisively casts her marriage into the fallen public realm of arbitrary hierarchies. Arveragus assumes governance of Dorigen not only for show, but also in their most intimate, interpersonal moments. The divide between behavior in public and behavior in private falls away, and Arveragus assumes the role of both titular and effective head of the household for the remainder of the narrative and, presumably, for the remainder of their marriage.

This theorization allows us to make sense of Arveragus’s troubling death threat. When he sends Dorigen off to keep her “trouthe” by having sex with Aurelius, Arveragus commands:

I yow forbade, up peyne of deeth,
That nevere, whl thee lasteth lyf ne breeth,
To no wight telle thou of this aventure—
As I may best, I wol my wo endure—
Ne make no contenance of heysynesse,
That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse (V 773-778).
Arveragus is concerned, as ever, with public perception of himself and his marriage. He demands that Dorigen keep her liaison with Aurelius a secret from everyone, and he pledges in return to maintain the public façade of happy relations, so that no one will suspect any wrongdoing or marital discord.

Unlike his previous exhortations to maintain outward appearances, however, this speech of Arveragus's integrates private repercussions with public behaviors. First of all, Arveragus here commands his spouse in their own home, thereby breaking the terms of their spousal agreement by which he would always obey Dorigen in private. Dorigen is not consulted as to how they might best proceed; it is Arveragus who deftly and authoritatively takes charge of the problematic situation. Moreover, Arveragus purports to uphold his edicts with physical violence. He threatens Dorigen with death should she ever break her terms by bringing shame on him via the public gaze. For the first time, Arveragus’s interest in public perception transforms his intimate privée relations with Dorigen. In his death threat, Arveragus asserts a private and physical superiority over Dorigen, and he employs his private authority in order to coerce the public behavior he desires.

Similarly, Arveragus’s promise that he will endure his woe to the best of his ability, “that folk of yow may [not] demen harm or gesse,” implies that Arveragus’s endurance is for the benefit of public perception, and not in order to repair or maintain convivial marital relations with Dorigen. This line suggests that behind closed doors Arveragus may be as cruel and as dictatorial as he wishes, but that he will refrain from bad-mouthing his wife or appearing displeased with her in front of other people. The original paradigm by which

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211 “Hoom cam Arveragus” (V 1460).
Edenic behaviors govern private interactions and fallen behaviors govern public ones gives way in favor of arbitrary authority of the husband over the wife at every turn, and the supposition of a happier life in public than that enjoyed at home. Fallen rules are taken up and assume primacy in all aspects of Dorigen and Arveragus's union, and even after the crisis passes, Dorigen and Arveragus do not establish anew the covenant that allowed for engagement with an Edenic marital paradigm. It is their “bliss” that is crowned “sovereign,” not Dorigen, and though Arveragus cherishes Dorigen like a queen, there is no more talk of mutual obedience. Dorigen will be loved, but Arveragus will be obeyed.

If the poem ended with Dorigen and Arveragus's ramshackle reconciliation and bland assurances of future pleasantness, we might conclude here, with a rather depressing but rather predictable progression from tentative egalitarian relations to a hierarchy prompted by a quasi-Eve. And yet, we must consider the true narrative trajectory of the poem, which branches away from the Dorigen and Arveragus union, and instead takes up the potential for egalitarian relations among the knight, the squire, and the clerk. The Franklin's parting query, “Which was the mooste fre, as thynketh yow?” eschews Dorigen entirely in favor of a comparison of both the gentil actions and the innate nobility of the three men in question.

In order to understand this surprising transition, we must return to the garden where Dorigen and Aurelius meet. We have already followed and interrogated the narrative following from a reading of the garden as unfallen when Dorigen enters in, and by

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213 Arveragus and Dorigen his wyf
In sovereyn blisse leden forth hir lyf.
Nevere eft ne was ther engre hem bitwene.
He cherisseth hire as though she were a queene,
And she was to hym trewe for everemoore. (V 1551-1555)
which she effects the progression of the poem with her Eve-like fault. Let us now pursue
the other option: the garden, by Wyclif’s terms, is already fallen. Its very paradisal qualities
are in fact the work of human hands and the carefully planned manipulations of craft.

If the garden is already fallen, if it already incorporates evidence of human
hierarchy, then Dorigen’s playful joke does not ascend to the order of original sin. It is
simply a misplaced jest, a thoughtless and wholly human remark made without any
performative or binding quality. Aurelius and Dorigen’s conversation becomes an exchange
like any number of similar exchanges in the romance tradition by which fidelity and honor
are tested, but which ultimately fail to effect change. Like Gawain’s playful exchanges with
Lady Bertolac, Aurelius’s exhortations and Dorigen’s responses ultimately do not influence
the trajectory of the narrative in any meaningful way. Of course, for the Franklin’s Tale, this
proves literally true. None of the threats, of sex between Dorigen and Aurelius, of Dorigen’s
suicide or Arveragus’s murder of Dorigen, of Aurelius’s death by heartbreak, or of his loss
of title and nobility, ultimately come to fruition.

Paradoxically, the fallen quality of the garden, its always already earthly state and
the craft that invests it with its particular kind of beauty, does not efface its Edenic quality.
We know that this garden sits squarely in a historical present and in a world populated by
human hierarchies, but it still represents a kind of naturalistic perfection. In fact, it is by
virtue of human craft, the very constituent of power differentials, that the garden appears
to be a paradise. Human work then becomes the effecting agent, the powerful actor, that
allows for a kind of return to a paradisal state. The fallen garden, which disallows original
sin, actually enables a continuity between the historical present and the imagined Edenic
state. Chaucer revises Wyclif to make craft a bridge between Eden and a post-Edenic world.
I suggest that is it by nature of this continuity that the Edenic egalitarianism Arveragus and Dorigen establish in their intimate interpersonal relations at the beginning of the narrative is here made available to the other players in the tale. If Eden is available, at least in some way, as a successful paradigm for human relationships, then the possibility that humans of different statuses, statuses based on their differing crafts, may enjoy egalitarian relations, is opened up to them. That is, the narrative transfers the rules that initially governed Arveragus and Dorigen’s intimate relations to the public interactions between knight, squire, and clerk by virtue of the interactions in this special garden.

When Arveragus sends Dorigen off to find Aurelius and keep her word, she goes back toward the beautiful garden in which she made her joke: “As she was bown to goon the wey forth right, Toward the gardyn there as she had hight” (V 1503-1504.). The garden is intimately tied up with Dorigen’s unfortunate joke; somehow the garden here becomes a representation of the promise that Dorigen made. Though Dorigen never promised Aurelius to meet him in that specific place, she returns there, as though to the scene of a crime. Perhaps, instead, her promise here, indicated by “hight,” is actually her promise to Arveragus, who bade her to make her way to the garden. Either way, the garden has special properties that make it appropriate as the place in which Dorigen should fulfill her promise. Aurelius, too, is making his way towards the garden: “And he was to the garden-ward also” (V 1505) the narrative absurdly obscures his purpose in doing so. First, the narrator tells us that Aurelius always kept close tabs on Dorigen, and followed her to the garden. Just a moment later, the narrator teases that Dorigen and Aurelius met “of aventure or grace.”
Whatever special property the garden holds, and whatever strange intercession caused Aurelius and Dorigen to meet, they did not do so in the garden, but instead in a busy city street: “right in the quykkest strete.” It is there, along with a squire and a maiden that Arveragus sent with Dorigen, and also in front of any passersby that happened their way, that Dorigen tells Aurelius that her husband has sent her to keep her trouthe, and also there that Aurelius’s lust leaves him and he releases Dorigen from her promise.

In the transition from Edenic garden to busy street, the narrative transfers the rules that govern the private intimate sphere to the public sphere. It is there, in view of all, and along with members of Arveragus’s household, that Aurelius experiences Arveragus’s acknowledgement that Dorigen’s word to him is as binding as her word to any other man, even to her husband. In this way, Arveragus elevates Aurelius to the status of his equal, extending to him the egalitarian respect that he has just removed from his relations with Dorigen. In this way, Arveragus assumes an Edenic paradigm of behavior toward Aurelius, acknowledging his innate nobility. Aurelius articulates as much to Dorigen: “Thus kan a squire doon a gentil dede, As wel a knyght, withouten drede” (V 1543-1544).

Aurelius’s conference with the magician-clerk produces a similar result; the clerk is eager to prove his own “gentiesse” in the face of the deeds of knight and squire. He claims “But if a clerk koude doon a gentil dede, As wel as any of yow, it is no drede!” (V 1622-1612).

What is the quality of “gentiesse” by which each of these three men measure themselves and one another? It is, I suggest, the innate nobility upon which Wyclif claims the perfect egalitarianism of Eden rests. His Edenic society, an aristocracy of aristocrats, is made possible by each human’s natural and inborn justice. Each inhabitant of Eden was equally just, and was therefore equally entitled to Eden in full. The question of craft is
ultimately moot; craft does not bear on a person’s justice. It is indeed justice, the ability to respond to a situation fairly and impartially, that the knight, squire, and clerk purport to espouse and demonstrate to one another and to themselves.

The narrative, then, moves from a marriage that oscillates between fallen and unfallen paradigms of behavior, to a world in which the fallen paradigm is absorbed wholly by marital relations, leaving the unfallen set of egalitarian relations available for cooption by men of different statuses. Dorigen’s absence does, as Lipton suggests, effect the improvement of homosocial relations that the knight, squire, and clerk experience. She is not able to contend for the prize of “most gentil,” but instead is required to bear the weight of the fallen paradigm for behavior.

The tale ends with Dorigen ensconced in what is imagined to be a happy marriage, but a marriage that no longer incorporates elements of Edenic egalitarianism. I suggest, then, that the uneasy egalitarianism that the knight, squire, and clerk inherit may not be assumed to function properly, either. This is not a tale of a hopeful Franklin who imagines a proto-Eden that he will be able to construct and inhabit, and by which his middle class aspirations will prove him equally in possession of innate justice as any member of nobility. Instead, it gives voice to the anxiety and uncertainty of his social status. In the consistently unstable machinations of the oscillation between the Edenic and the fallen, the Franklin expresses desires for a transformative return to origin, and his concern that such transformation is ultimately impossible.
Experimentalist Erotics: The Bower Suspended

ipsa quoque inmunis rastroque intacta nec ullis
saucia vomeribus per se dabat omnia tellus,
contentique cibis nullo cogente creatis
arbuteos fetus montanaque fraga legebant
cornaque et in duris haerentia mora rubetis
et quae decidrant patula lovis arbore glandes.
ver erat aeternum, placidique tepentibus auris
mulcebant zephyri natos sine semine florae;
mox etiam fruges tellus inarata ferebat,
flumina iam lactis, iam flumina nectaris ibant,
flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice melae.\textsuperscript{214}

Above reads Ovid’s famed ode to the Golden Age and his celebratory account of the natural world’s beneficent attitude toward humankind. The generous earth freely and eagerly lays herself at the disposal of the human creature to aliment himself as he will without the toilsome tasks of plowing, harrowing, turning and fertilizing the ground, or further assisting the growth of crops. Instead, the Golden Age takes place in, quite literally, a land of milk and honey, where wild strawberries lie awaiting deft fingers, and blackberries cascade over their bushes.

\textsuperscript{214}Then of her own accord the earth produce a store of every fruit. The harrow touched her not, nor did the plowshare wound her fields. And man content with given food, and none compelling, gathered arbute fruits and wild strawberries on the mountain sides, and ripe blackberries clinging to the bush, and corners and sweet acorns on the ground, down fallen from the spreading tree of Jove. Eternal Spring! Soft breathing zephyrs soothed and warmly cherished buds and blooms, produced without a seed. The valleys though unplowed gave many fruits; the fields though not renewed white glistened with the heavy bearded wheat: rivers flowed milk and nectar, and the trees, the very oak trees, then gave honey of themselves. This translation is taken from the University of Chicago’s Perseus site. \textit{Ovid Metamorphoses} http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=PerseusLatinTexts&query=Ov.%20Met.%201.89&getid=1
And yet, much as we might be tempted to read it so, this is not exactly the fecund garden Marvell describes in which clusters of grapes crush themselves into his waiting mouth. It is not the humorous Land of Cokagne, in which roasted fowls rush about with knives already inserted into their flesh for easy carving. That is, Ovid’s easeful countryside does not afford the kind of indolent luxury that depends upon passivity and sloth, where the labor of roasting the fowl or even of plucking the grapes is invisibly performed. Ovid’s Golden Age humans, though living in a state of nature that conforms in every respect to their most comfortable and graceful way of life, still must gather the foods that they require. That is, though we must indeed suppose this labor to be gentle and of short duration, Ovid’s early humans did work. They explored the fertile creation and gathered of its bounty that which, to them, seemed most likely to support and satisfy.

Virgil’s *Georgics*, which echo Ovid’s Golden Age, conform on this point:

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ante iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni
ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum
fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus
omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.
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Humans must at least gather that food which they wish to enjoy, and in doing so must necessarily take stock of and, to a certain extent, engage with, their sublime home. Here the

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215 The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach.

216 Amusingly, the poem itself seems to anticipate comparison to a Classical Golden Age or to a Judeo-Christian Eden, and differentiates fantastical realm from these others: “po3 Paradis be miri and bri3t Cokaygn is of fairir si3t” (5–6). That is, “Though Paradise may be merry and bright/ Cokaygne is a fairer sight” (translation mine). http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173948

217 Fields knew no taming hand of husbandmen
To mark the plain or mete with boundary-line.
Even this was impious; for the common stock
They gathered, and the earth of her own will
All things more freely, no man bidding, bore.
Ovidian and Virgilian traditions overlap with the Arcadian; the first humans, living in a perfect state of nature, are imagined to belong to a kind of peasant or shepherd noblesse. As Juliet Dusinberre writes of Ovid, “Work is not absent, but is a true source of content to the country shepherd.” The simplicity of life, whether shepherding or food-gathering, marks these humans’ innate nobility, rather than providing any indication of their inferiority. Human work, then, figures significantly, if passively, as a crucial constituent of the Golden Age.

The ideal of the peasant-aristocrat, as we saw in the previous chapter’s investigation of Wyclif, takes hold of the Lollard reformer imagination and instills itself into the weighty position of the first human in Wyclif’s writings on Eden. Like Wyclif, revolutionary preacher John Ball takes up the idea of the early human worker’s nobility in his oft-quoted Blackheath Sermon of 1381. The “proof text” of the sermon was, as Walshingham noted at the time, a variant on a common proverb. Ball’s version, of course:

Whan Adam dalfe and Eve span / Who was thane a gentil man?

Ball elides himself here with the classical tradition cited above. When Adam and Eve, alone on the earth, made use of their new and exciting habitat in order to facilitate life for themselves and for their progeny, who then might be deemed “gentil”? The joke, naturally, is that in a society of two, the idea of gentility or superiority is not only ludicrous but distracting from the pleasant and necessary tasks each must undertake to promote happy

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and healthful life on earth. No one is a gentleman in this pleasant working society. Or, as Wyclif would have it, all early humans are “gentil”; this early polity is an aristocracy made up entirely of aristocrats.

Ball pithily shortens an earlier proverb, eliminating the second line of what once had been a couplet. The original proverb emphasizes the element of pride in the formulations of stratified society. This pride, conspicuous in its absence from the Adamic lifestyle, is the agent that muddies and mars the pleasure of modern man:

When Adam delf and Eve span, spir, if thou wil spede, Whane was þan þe pride of man, That now meres his mede?

Ball eschews the specificity of “pride” in favor of a more open and more culturally salient commentary on the shifting quality of “gentilesse.” By the time Chaucer takes up the question of whether the “gentil” person is so by birth, by breeding, by innate nobility, or by noble action, the notion that gentilesse could be divorced from aristocratic birth was a “medieval commonplace.”

Nevertheless, it was a popular and oft-repeated narrative, and one that Ball employed most effectively in his outdoor address.

Work emerges in Ball’s manifesto as powerfully connected to a classical poetic tradition but occupies a weightier role in his social commentary. In Ball’s reworking of the proverb, the delving and spinning actions of the first humans become even more emphatically constitutive of their innate nobility than in the earlier version. In the

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rhetorical question he asks, Ball demonstrates that the arbitrary distinctions of gentility were unnatural to the state of the created human. As Steven Justice has demonstrated, for Ball, “social difference [is] a feature of the corrupted rather than the created order.”

Significantly, however, for our reading of the Lollard tradition, Ball does not differentiate between types of work. Adam can perform a very different kind of labor than his wife, but their joint engagement in labor to sustain and enhance their existence functions as the primary mechanism by which their equality, both to one another and to other men and women, may be understood.

Ball therefore effectively imagines the original, natural, and good state of the human creature as entirely egalitarian. In this, though his end remains the same, Ball’s theorization of early humans diverges significantly from Wyclif’s. For Wyclif, as we have seen, it is the lack of any occupation, trade, or material good that allows for the perfect equality among humans that he imagines in Eden. That is, it would matter immensely to Wyclif if Adam had dug while Eve spun; because the two occupations are different, they might then be valued differently, and therefore could prove a rationale valuing their authors differently. In Eve Ball, by contrast, locates the potential for equality and the inherent claim to “gentilesse” that all humans have, specifically in their labor. Even though Adam digs while Eve weaves, two very different tasks, it is their equal claim to their tasks that Ball employs to theorize their equal claim to “gentil” status. Where Wyclif would have wrung hands over the differences in employment and claimed that such differences could and must be used to differentiate the quality of the workers, Ball equates labor to labor, regardless of the

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specificities of each task, or even the differences in aptitude or skill that each requires or cultivates.

Indeed, the gendered nature of the individual tasks emphasizes Ball’s insistence that appropriate labor, in whatever form, allows for egalitarian relations between human beings. It is particularly telling that Wyclif, as we saw in the previous chapter, refuses to distinguish between male and female inhabitants of Eden. Were he do to so, as Augustine, Aquinas, and others have had to in their lengthier meditations on Edenic life, he would have to acknowledge one potential difference between Adams and Eves. Wyclif choses to leave this question aside as he pursues his theory of egalitarian life. The notable absence of gender and sex from his *Tractatus* need not color our entire reading of his view of Eden. It does, however, reveal that an attempt to force egalitarian relations between humans that does not comment explicitly on gender leaves itself particularly open for the kind of trajectory of effective social relations that the *Franklin’s Tale* illustrates. If we do not attend to gender’s specific needs when constructing a paradigm of equality, we too often allow an egalitarian structure to emerge among men only, while women (like our unfortunate Dorigen) are shunted to the side, silenced, or erased entirely.

Ball’s project does not rely on a complete absence of difference in his inhabitants of Eden; he is therefore content to establish specifically gendered distinctions in labor while still subscribing to a leveling model of interpersonal equality. As Garbaty has demonstrated in his discussions of the Wife of Bath’s textile work, the medieval literary tradition reads Eve’s spinning as an act that communicates and attempts to define ideas of femininity and wifeliness; Eve is, as Donaldson states, “the prototype of all women... the weaver who spun
while Adam dug the earth.” The plowman, like Langland’s Piers or like Chaucer’s gentle farmer, is similarly an analogue for an ideal, Christ-like, masculinity. It is all the more exciting, then, that Ball should highlight these tasks that seem to differentiate the first man from the first woman, and instead demonstrate that their collective engagement in labor practicesoverrides these gendered differences and instead allows each to claim an equal share of innate human nobility. Ball offers an alternative to Wyclif’s model of social relationships by which he acknowledges differences in labor, even differences that might be gendered, but does not allow those differences to compromise an Edenic egalitarianism.

How then can we reconcile Ball’s almost Pauline insistence on the qualitative equality of labor with Wyclif’s concern that any difference in task will either indicate or produce differences in status? In order to consider this tension carefully and attempt to address it, we must attend to the differences in Wyclif’s and Ball’s nascent worlds. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, Wyclif describes the natural state of the human creature by casting him in Eden; all of Wyclif’s theories on the state of nature are therefore his imaginings of how an unfallen world would have functioned.

Ball is engaged in a different kind of project. According to authoritative theological tradition, Adam’s delving and Eve’s spinning are products of the fall; once cast out of Eden, Adam and Eve must labor to sustain themselves and to provide for their offspring. In the

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224 Steven Justice suggests a theorization for divergences between Ball’s and Wyclif’s social imperatives. Wyclif’s goal was “to give to fiscal imperative the urgency of an evangelical imperative.” But, it is important to note that Justice believes that Wyclif imagined kings and lords as the authorities who would redistribute the wealth of the clergy. It is John Ball whose theories of egalitarianism “specify the village community as an authoritative subgroup over against the clergy and the wealthier laity.” Justice demonstrates how Ball purposely misreads Peres Plowman in order to lend credence to his own views. Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*, 104.
Canticum de creatione, for instance, God sends Michael to teach the child-like humans how to function in a newly troublesome world: “þo sente god Michel To techen Adam… Boþe to diche and delve and save sedes on erthe to growe.” Similarly, Eve demonstrates her comprehension of her newly changed situation in the N-Town play cycle when she exclaims to Adam: “Ye must delve and I xal spynne.” Therefore, a typical or normative use of delving and spinning seems to place his original humans in a fallen world. That is, when we see a woman spinning, we know she occupies a fallen world in which she has to work, as opposed to an Edenic world where she is free of labor.

Adam and Eve dig and weave in a fallen world because the same theological tradition that punishes both humans with labor also punishes Eve for her primary transgression with an arbitrary demotion in social status. Indeed, the N-town plays voice this very castigation:

Womman, thu sowtyst this synnyng
And bad hym breke myn byddyng.
Therfore, thu shalt ben undyrlyng
To mannys byddyng bend.225

Adam and Eve’s equal access to gentility cannot coexist with this punitive tradition that exalts one gendered being over the other.

Ball’s view of Edenic work functions very differently. Ball’s first humans work as an expression of the equality that is essentially Edenic; moreover, he assumes that the very work that brands men and women equal to one another and also equal to their fellows, may be employed in a fallen world in order to reclaim that original Edenic egalitarianism. That is, Ball imagines that his Adam and Eve promote model social relationships, usually

thought to stem from a perfect naturalistic world order in Eden, and therefore unfallen, while effecting their very egalitarianism through their labor, typically coded as fallen. Ball, then, seems to imagine his first humans as somehow straddling or, perhaps more accurately, bridging an Edenic egalitarian state with a fallen laboring society. Joanna Picciotto puts it elegantly: “a tradition of celebratory treatments of the first worker in whom all humans originated and in whom all were represented seems to suspend the Adamic delver-between his fallen and unfallen state; the image of the first laborer in his lack of pride merges with Adam in the state of blameless innocence.” As in the Ovidian and Virgilian traditions, natural labor here indicates an exalted and innately righteous quality of the human creature. The fall falls away in the face of continuous and naturalistic labor. Moreover, Ball’s emphasis on differences in labor and his simultaneous commitment to social equality allow his theory to address the kinds of gender problems from a Wycliffian Eden that the Franklin’s Tale so effectively illustrates.

John Milton takes up the tradition of the originary peasant-aristocrat in his depictions of the first humans. Adam and Eve, like Ball’s proverbial parents and like Ovid’s Golden Age humans, enjoy a pleasing working life in their Eden. As Adam rather unnecessarily exhorts Eve in Book Four:

But let us ever praise him, and extol
His bounty, following our delightful task,
To prune these growing plants, and tend these flowers,
Which were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet (IV 434-437).

For Adam, especially, this horticultural labor in Eden is indistinguishable from pleasure; it is a kind of wealthy gentleman’s pastime or hobby. Indeed, though he alludes to the more

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useful tasks of pruning and tending, the only product of labor of Adam’s that we actually 
encounter is the flower-garland he weaves for Eve’s hair in Book 9. Eve is being native of 
the garden. She was built out of Adam’s flesh within the confines of the garden, whereas 
Adam was built from the muddy earth outside the garden and then transplanted there. 
Perhaps owing to her native status, Eve seems to have a more rigorous and more technical 
view of the work she and her husband are enjoined to perform. She has noticed that the 
more she trims the plants of the garden, the more exuberant is their growth, until now they 
are overtaking even her careful shearing overnight. She notes:

The work under our labor grows,  
Luxurious by restraint; what we by day  
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,  
One night or two with wanton growth derides  
Tending to wild (IX 208-212).

Both Adam and Eve, though with differing degrees of severity, notice that their labor 
in the garden is something beyond a mild and hedonistic gathering of foods and enjoyment 
of surroundings. Eve almost apocalyptically notes the garden’s propensity to overgrow, and 
describes the labor of keeping its monstrous abundance in check as a task that grows 
exponentially. Even Adam acknowledges that there are tasks to perform that could 
somehow be imagined to be taxing or tiresome, but claims that Eve’s company forestalls 
any such feeling. Nevertheless, even the imaginary “toilsome” functions to suggest that 
Edenic labor can be less than pleasant.

“Toilsome” appears twice in Paradise Lost, once in Adam’s speech above, and once 
when Eve, finally calmed and newly bestowed with her life-giving epithet Mother, 
describes fallen life to Adam:

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227 The hair-garland rather pathetically announces Adam and Eve’s imminent consumption of the forbidden 
fruit and the adjoining necessity of creating clothing (IX 838-842).
Where’er our day’s work lies, though now enjoined
Laborious, till day droop; while here we dwell,
What can be toilsome in these pleasant walks?
Here let us live, though in fall’n state, content (XI: 177-280).

Though Eve is mistaken in thinking that she and Adam can remain within the
garden, she accurately describes the condition their fallen lives will take. As in Adam’s
naïve tract on his labor practices above, Eve here rather more powerfully mitigates the
unpleasantness of the labor she anticipates by suggesting that the walks she and Adam so
enjoy and, presumably, their fellowship in such walks, will sweeten their toil. Just as in
Eden, then, work that might be imagined to be unpleasant, and work that can and will grow
radically in quantity and in content, can be eased by the human pleasures Adam and Eve as
yet may enjoy.

Critics in recent years have come to theorize that Milton’s labor establishes
significant continuity between Eden and a post-Edenic world. As I have indicated, topmost
among them is Joanna Picciotto who, in her acclaimed Labors of Innocence in Early Modern
England employs both Digger ideology and nascent experimentalism in order to render
Milton’s fall a “thing indifferent,” and, perhaps even more significantly, a surmountable
barrier to naturalistic unity of human and environment and, therefore, a greater potential
for human contentment in the fallen world.228 Breaking from an orthodox theological
tradition by which the castigatory fall marks an irrevocable division between Edenic health
and happiness and post-Edenic confusion and loss, Picciotto reads Miltonic labor as
undergoing very little change from a pre-fallen state to a fallen state. Indeed, its continual
employment offers a means by which one could, in fact, get back to the garden.

Milton takes up the narrative of continuity between an Edenic and a post-Edenic state that Ball employs in the Blackheath Sermon. Milton, however, establishes the potential for continuity not by writing Edenic equality into a fallen agro-centric world, but rather more radically by incorporating elements of fallen life into his unfallen paradise. Even before he should know what toil is, Adam is able to imagine it and to accurately attribute it as a negative lens for labor. Eve recognizes this theoretical toil as the sweat-inducing work that she and Adam will have to endure, and will have to succor by the balm of their companionate walks. Even the very nature of Eve’s mistake above emphasizes the strong connection between Edenic work and post-Edenic work. If the garden can be experienced as fallen, the nature of the outdoor work that Adam and Eve have done and will continue to do must similarly continue to be recognizable to them.

Though the jump from the Lollard theorization of egalitarian relations and redistribution of wealth to Milton’s 17th century thoughts on labor might seem an overly ambitious step, there is scholarly precedent for comparing the two specific modes of thought. Early Protestant theorists, especially, take the Lollards as proto-Reformers, and therefore draw a tenuous but plausible connection between the rhetoric of Wyclif and his followers with later rebellious Reformation sects. As Christopher Hill suggests in his essay “From Lollards to Levellers,”: “I think we can trace direct links in ideas from Lollards, through Familists and Anabaptists, to the radical sectaries, the Levellers, Diggers, Ranters and Quakers of the mid-seventeenth century.”229 It is specifically Milton’s interest in the 17th century Diggers that makes the above comparison more than an exercise in toppling

dominoes. Gerrard Winstanley’s pamphlet *The New Law of Righteousness* employs the figure of Adam as the origin both of man’s salvation and of his sin, but focuses especially on all man’s equal claim to the land based upon each man’s equal claim to Adamic heritage:

For truly the common-people by their labours, from the first rise of Adam, this particular interest upheld by the fleshes law to this day, they have lifted up their Land-lords and others to rule in tyranny and oppression over them. And let all men say what they will, so long as such a Rulers as call the Land theirs, upholding this particular propriety of Mine and Thine; the common people shall never have their liberty, for the Land ever freed from troubles.  

Winstanley, like Edward Selby and others among the early Levellers, claim that all men have equal rights to land based on the God-given imperative that Adam (and his descendants all) care for the Edenic garden. As Selby puts it, “my heirdome, my inheritance, by lineal descent from the loins of Adam, and so to all the sons of men.”  

Milton’s interest in and our speculative assumption of his own sympathies for the Digger’s philosophy places his depiction of Adam and Eve’s joint agricultural project within the body of 17th century thought that imagines Adamic labor as the ground for egalitarian social relations. As in Ball, the imperative to work includes both Adam and Eve; unlike the first humans in Ball’s proverb, Milton’s Adam and Eve are mostly engaged in similar tasks. Eve certainly does demonstrate her propensity for household arts when she hosts an impromptu gathering for Raphael, but otherwise, her labors are indistinguishable from Adam’s. It is, in fact, most amusing that a rather slow-witted Adam should condescendingly praise Eve’s suggestion that they garden more efficiently: “nothing lovelier can be found/In woman, than to study household good.” The “household” is no more or less than the garden itself, and the “good” is the work to which Adam and Eve fall together each day. Indeed,

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labor is equally available to all members of the Edenic polity, and it shall continue to be so even after the unfortunate tasting of fruit.

Picciotto’s argument made waves in the sphere of Milton scholarship, as it rightfully should; she convincingly demonstrates that Milton undermines the fall’s power and permanence without simply resorting to the eventual promise of life after death. Picciotto’s Milton fleshes out an Augustinian interest in “the time that remains” not as the waiting period that will fold upon itself over and over until it spontaneously combusts in the Final Judgment, but rather as the tenuous, troubled, expansive and robust world punctuated by both the expulsion from Eden and the life and death of Jesus, but neither begun nor ended by either event.

I wholeheartedly agree with a reading of Milton that demonstrates the poet’s commitment to the affirmed significance of life on earth. Picciotto has done such rich work on labor in the poem and its promise of continuity and rehabilitation that I need not dwell upon the matter further; my earlier reading simply serves to differentiate between to divergent strains of heterodox medieval thought about Eden, one that causes gender problems and one that seems to provide a proto-Marxist solution to those problems. As I turn from the medieval in this final chapter and take up the progression of Edenic poetry and its implications for reading Paradise Lost, I will examine an aspect of Milton’s fall and of the potential continuity he imagines between an unfallen and a fallen state. In addition to working in their garden, restraining it when necessary and phenomenologically or experientially gaining a deeper and more lasting expertise in the engagement with their surroundings, Adam and Eve also build, cultivate, grow, and cull the various elements that make up their intimate lives. The passion that Adam and Eve experience for one another, as
well as the sexual practices in which they engage are, like the garden, products of these first humans’ experimentation and experiential growth. They do not begin life in the garden perfectly equipped to perform either the affective or the erotic components of their relationship, but rather learn from their observations how the might best cultivate closeness, celebrate intimacy, and eschew estrangement. As in the garden, Eve here is also the more inquisitive and the more adept; her scientific mind makes her a better lover as well as a better gardener. But, despite this disparity, my central claim remains that Milton’s Adam and Eve build and renovate their intimate experiences, and even bait, manipulate, and redirect their passions during their lives before the fall. Passion, then, emerges as a second and perhaps even more powerful point of continuity between Milton’s fallen and unfallen human states. Therefore, like labor, passion in the fallen world may be molded through experimental attentions and playfully inquisitive behavior in order to resemble the contentment that characterized Edenic relations.

Most critics heretofore, though engaged in reading the thoughtful and often furtive descriptions of Adam and Eve’s intimate lives, have insisted upon Milton’s adherence to an Augustinian understanding of how Edenic and post-Edenic bodies and souls function. For Augustine, the first humans in Eden were split between body and soul, just as the post-Edenic humans that he describes in Psalm six are. But, before the fall, Augustine suggests that the human body, the earthly flesh, was entirely subjugated by the rational soul. Because of this subjugation, the first humans were able to enjoy Eden in a kind of perfect state of naturalism; there were no conflicts between the desire of the body and the will of the soul, but rather a joyful union of purpose between the two: “As happy, then, as were these our first parents, who were agitated by no mental perturbations, and annoyed by no
bodily discomforts... and so should the saints have lived after no taste of labor, pain, or death...” 232 William Poole explicates this and the surrounding passages, especially attending to the way that Augustine’s description here would excuse Adam and Eve from the powerful influences of the Early Modern passions. He quotes J.F. Senault’s restatement of Augustine: “‘In this happy estate the soul commanded with mildness, the body obeyed with delight, and whatsoever object presented itself, these two parties did always agree.’” So ruled, the body then functioned as a kind of analogue or physical manifestation of the soul; it could not but agree with the mandates of the soul and therefore is divided from but essentially constituted by the soul. The body exists, but falls away before the overarching significance, the truthfulness and hyperexistence, of the soul.

It is partly due to the nostalgic seductiveness of this theorization of bodies and souls, and partly of course due to Milton’s deep engagement with Augustine, that critics are so eager to imagine Milton’s Adam and Eve as living a life in Eden devoid of strong emotion or passion. Peter Fiore argues in his comprehensive Milton and Augustine that Adam and Eve are governed by pure Augustinian rationality until their fall: “They are pictured as calm, controlled individuals without any cause to exercise restraint.” 233 Adam and Eve’s idyllic behavior, Fiore notes, is nowhere demonstrated more forcibly than in their measured sexual relationship, which seems to him to be entirely driven by rational thought: “The whole scene argues for reason and the will in complete control of the passions.” Like Fiore, Grantham Turner also locates Adam and Eve’s pleasure in sexual intercourse squarely within an Augustinian paradigm of erotics. For Turner, it is the joy of

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233 Peter Amadeus Fiore, Milton and Augustine (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1982); 23.
procreation that supplies Milton’s first humans with their enjoyment of rational sex.

Paradisal sex, then, is a component of a profound emotional relationship between Adam and Eve; it is therefore not devoid of feeling, but neither does this kind of sex allow for the spontaneous excitement requisite of passion. Picciotto similarly lays claim to an innocent and rational sexuality for the pre-lapsarian Adam and Eve, in which sex before the fall is characterized by the same curious and rationally detached examination as their calm and measured work in the garden.

The above claims typically hinge on the notion that Adam and Eve’s pre-lapsarian sex life in *Paradise Lost* is characterized by its lack of passion; passion requires a certain distance between the excitation of the body and a rational interest in sex, and therefore can have no place in Eden. Such positions, though they accurately reflect the Augustinianism that inflects the poem, are, however, untenable when applied to Milton’s first humans. As we shall see, Adam describes an irrational and spontaneous desire for Eve that is quite out of keeping with Adam and Eve’s own phenomenological experiences of themselves and of one another.

Of recent critics, Picciotto is most vehement in her condemnation of post-lapsarian sex as inflected by sordid passions. She supports her distinction between sex before the

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235 Picciotto, *Reforming the Garden*. 58.
236 William Poole acknowledges my central point; he agrees that Milton’s Adam does not conform to Augustine’s passionless Adam (*Milton and the Idea of the Fall*, 183). Poole, however, does not devote much time to Milton’s theorizations of sexuality, and in fact is much less confident that Milton’s Adam and Eve have sex than most critics: “The Miltonic narrator is not denying that Adam and Eve had sex, but he is less certain about it than is often supposed (167).
237 Indeed, Picciotto’s harsh critique of Adam and Eve’s fallen sex is particularly noteworthy since her readings of the first human’s experimentalism typically demonstrate continuity between a pre and post lapsarian state. For her, sexuality is the one aspect of human life that is irrevocably cheapened by the fall.
fall and sex after the fall as figured by the floral bed on which Adam and Eve enjoy one another after having eaten the prohibited fruit. Rather than making their way to the prepared bower, Adam and Eve fall on an obliging piece of paradisal ground, where they are exposed to the eye of the reader: "Instead of seeing the act through a tissue of cultivated flowers, we see bodies copulating on top of wildflowers ("Flours were the Couch"), on an as yet uncultivated patch of ground they come across fortuitously (9.1039)." Picciotto’s harsh critique of Adam and Eve’s fallen sex is particularly noteworthy since her readings of the first human’s experimentalism typically demonstrate continuity between a pre- and post-lapsarian state. For her, sexuality is the one aspect of human life that is irrevocably cheapened by the fall.

I’ll first call into question the notion that the location of the first sex act after eating the apple, an obliging patch of wildflowers, should be read as evidence of a guilty change in sexuality produced by the fall. It is true that a quick effect of eating the apple seems to be an increase in sexual passion, for Adam and Eve alike. In order that they might act on their desires, Adam leads Eve to a comfortable spot nearby:

Her hand he seis’d, and to a shadie bank,  
Thick overhead with verdant roof imbowr’d  
He led her nothing loath; Flours were the Couch,  
Pansies, and Violets, and Asphodel,  
And Hyacinth, Earth’s freshest softest lap.  
There they thir fill of Love and Loves disport (IX 1037-1042).

Let us attend to the flowers first. Picciotto objects to this bed because it is not carefully cultivated, like the nuptial bower, but rather boasts an indiscriminate group of blooms tangling together in their natural disarray. Indeed, tampering with the flowers that traditionally adorned a bridal bed does appear in other texts to signal guilty sex, as

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238 Joanna Picciotto, Reforming the Garden, 62.
opposed to the purity that flowers connote; Prospero, rather pornographically, warns Ferdinand that should he prematurely penetrate Miranda’s “maidenknot,” “discord shall bestrew/ The union of your bed with weeds” (III.iii.20-21). Here, however, we have no weeds, but rather a collection of fragrant and delicate flowers that construct “Earth’s freshest softest lap.” We can hardly take this as a space intended to demonstrate a newly degraded sexuality. In fact, as the nouned verb “imbowr’d” suggest, this lovely spot seems to provide a makeshift bower, not particularly different from the one that Eve so carefully curates. Indeed, the violet and hyacinth make up the soft ground of the nuptial bower and also the comfortable bed that Adam and Eve conveniently find here (IV.700-701). We might do well to remember that it is Eve, not Adam, who cultivates the marriage bower. Their first visit to the bower, then, would not have been a visit to a well-decorated spot; Eve was newly created, and Adam had neither expected nor planned for his bride. The first trip to the nuptial bower, then, would likely have been a visit to a place very much resembling the floral couch which Adam and Eve now encounter.

The sex that Adam and Eve engage in after partaking of the fruit additionally resembles Adam and Eve’s first sexual encounter much more than it diverges from that pre-lapsarian scene. Rather than engaging in “bestial rutting;” Adam and Eve are said to partake here in mutually desired “amorous play” (X.1045). “Play” characterizes Adam and Eve’s sex lives throughout the poem, connoting innocent and mutual pleasure. Indeed, Adam links this moment of play with moments in the past, telling Eve that he has not been so excited by her beauty since the day of her creation: “For never did thy Beautie since the day/ I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorn’d/ With all perfections, so enflame my

239 Joanna Picciotto, Reforming the Garden, 58.
sense / With ardor to enjoy thee...” (X.1029-1032). He does not experience his passion for Eve as something new and overwhelming, but rather as something that he has already experienced before. As we have already seen, Adam’s passion is not perfectly aligned with his rational capacities, but it never has been. He is now therefore experiencing a spontaneous passion that is already the hallmark of his erotic life.

In keeping with his first experience of passion in which Adam “seized” Eve’s hand and led her to the bower, Adam again seizes Eve and leads her willingly to a comfortable reclining bed of flowers. Kerrigan, et al., gloss this second seizure, prudishly noting that Adam does not lead Eve “gently” this time. But, Eve’s willingness to be lead, her “nothing loath,” must not in itself be read as an indication of the inferiority of this sex scene to the first. Indeed, Eve does not need to be cajoled into following her husband this time. In fact, we might read this post-lapsarian sex scene as the first entirely mutual sex scene in Paradise Lost. Eve does not need to cultivate Adam's passions, nor must she herself be coaxed and guided, by both God and husband, to bed Adam. Instead, her desire for Adam matches his desire for her.

It must be clear, then, that Milton’s Adam and Eve are not the sedated automatons that a superimposition of Augustine’s musings in City of God would have them. These humans react to one another’s bodies and minds spontaneously both before and after the fall. Indeed, the “fallen sex” that critics are eager to condemn resembles nothing so much as Adam and Eve’s first erotic experience, moments after Eve’s creation. Her beauty then, as indeed in the moments after consuming the apple, so excites Adam that he finds himself

240 “My other half: with that thy gentle hand / Seisd mine, I yielded” (IV. 489-490).
241 Kerrigan et al, 547, note 1037.
eager to copulate as quickly as possible. We must infer that he is experiencing physical excitation of the body that propel his behavior forward. Indeed, as I will later discuss, he relates these excitations to his angelic visitor, whose sexual experiences are quite different from these human ones.

Not only do the Edenic humans enjoy a kind of spontaneous sexual arousal that moves them to engage in erotic behavior, they also employ their experimental skills to shape, direct, and augment that behavior. Milton introduces Adam and Eve to the reader through Satan’s eyes and, after an initial move to distinguish between the sexes and to create a gendered hierarchy based on those distinctions, the poem enters into a strangely erotic passage. Moving through the two Biblically sanctioned creation tales, the narrative becomes infected by the attention paid to the difference in the sexes. This difference is explicitly apparent because the bodies of the first man and woman are unclothed, and the poem becomes absorbed in imagining a kind of erotics that involves those naked bodies and their differences. The erotics of this brief passage also further delineate the power dynamic between Adam and Eve. The poem follows the line of Eve’s hair, which falls from her head to her waist, and then retreats into a coded account of Adam and Eve’s sexuality:

She as a veil down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Disheveled, but in wanton ringlets waved
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection, but required with gentle sway,
And by her yielded, by him best received,
Yielded with sweet coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet reluctant amorous delay (IV.304-311).

This sentence ostensibly takes Eve’s long hair as its subject, but at the crucial enjambment at line 307, “Subjection” becomes the entity described. Eve’s long veil-like hair demonstrates both her piety and her subjection to her husband; once Eve’s hair has been
followed down to her slender waist and the nakedness that it barely conceals, subjection is
taken up, gently required of Eve, and yielded by her to her husband. Eve is, as elsewhere,
imagined to be willing in her submission.242

The passage begins with Eve's hair, suggestively “disheveled” (it is similarly
discomposed after her strangely erotic Satanic dream), and this hair, seemingly of its own
accord, leads the reader/viewer down the line of Eve’s body to her waist, tempting the
reader to continue the visual descent downwards to the genitalia that is hinted at but never
described. This description, then, has a kind of flirtatious, seductive quality to it; it
encourages a kind of scopophilic pleasure in the reader by allowing him to imagine this
long, messy, hair that runs down a naked body to a “slender waist,” but, like the hair, stops
just short of a description of the woman’s lower body. The result is an emphasis on that
lower body. Since the genitalia and legs are not described, the passage seems to place a
tacit prohibition on looking at, or imagining looking at, those parts of Eve’s body. This
prohibition serves in fact to draw attention to that which is not described, and to excite the
reader by tempting him to imagine that which he knows he should not imagine.

The seduction that Eve’s hair performs on the reader provides a model for
understanding the way in which Eve seduces, or at least attracts, her husband. The erotics
of the passage are particularly located in the series of contradictions (“sweet coy,” “modest
pride,” “sweet reluctant amorous delay”) that depend on a kind of coquettishness. Eve does
submit, but it is a coy submission, and pleasure is deferred by her play-struggles.243 These

242 It is likely that Milton is referring to Spencer’s Bower of Bliss episode here. Faerie Queene, book II,
especially lines 60-69.
243 Kerrigan et al gloss “reluctant” as “struggling,” but note that the later implications of unwillingness had not
yet been attributed to the term. Kerrigan et al, 394.
lines disrupt the power paradigm that Milton’s second, unequal, image of the first humans puts into place. Eve is still subject to Adam. But, if the erotics of the passage depend on a flirtatious deferral of gratification, Eve is certainly the author of that delay. Just as the prohibition on gazing at Eve’s lower body excites the reader, bringing those indicators of Eve’s womanhood to the forefront of the reader’s mind, by putting off Adam’s sexual gratification, Eve increases her husband’s desire for her. It is her emphasis on her own modesty, and her initial refusals that make the “yielding,” repeated twice, so sexy for her, for Adam, and for the reader. Eve’s struggles with modesty and her coy deferrals of pleasure intensify the effect of her ultimate submission, which only then can be “best received.”

If, as I suggest, Eve cultivates Adam’s passion through a kind of submissive pretense, she therefore employs her understanding of her husband’s sexual personality and uses this information in order to structure a more fulfilling sex life for him and, presumably, for herself. It is true that some rationality must be employed on the part of Eve to inspire Adam’s passion and to encourage that passion. If Eve accurately notes the kinds of behaviors that excite Adam, and produces those behaviors in order to incite her husband to sexual activity (or at least to provoke his libido), she relies on Adam’s capacity for spontaneous physical impulse, ungoverned by rational thought. Passion, then, and especially a physically experienced arousal, is characteristic of Edenic sexuality and can also be shaped, structured, and cultivated by a thoughtful and phenomenologically adept subject.

Sex itself is an enjoyable enough object of inquiry, both for Milton’s Adam and Eve, as well as for the present critic. As I suggest, however, sex in Paradise Lost is intimately
connected to the poem’s reading of Augustine. Milton has typically been imagined to flesh out a theologically orthodox Augustine who adheres to the picture of the passionless human in Eden. As we have just seen, Milton does no such thing. Instead, like the romance authors and like Chaucer, Milton engages in much more complex and exciting work of bringing forward and investigating the contradictions in Augustine’s account of the natural human creature. Sex is a particularly fertile aspect of this human’s experience because it hinges upon desire and asks the body and the spirit to encounter one another and vie for the superior position. How, then, does Milton reframe the relationship between the body and the spirit in his poem? How does his inclusion of spontaneous physical desire, and his allowance that that desire can be cultivated even in Eden, yield a richer understanding of the natural and healthy workings of the human creature, and suggest his ability to reclaim those mechanisms and their rewards after the fall?

Before he addresses the human experience of body and spirit, Milton addresses the question of how Augustinian dualism functions in his exploration of Satan. In 1894, John E. B. Mayor placed a short entry in The Classical Review drawing a parallel between one of Milton’s most celebrated lines in Paradise Lost and a line from Augustine’s meditation on Psalm Six:

I do not know whether any one has noticed a parallel to the famous words (Par. Lost I 254) ‘the mind is its own place.’

Aug. enarr. In ps. vi ad fin. Saepe enim mens nitens pergere in Deum, concussa in ipso itinere trepidat: et plerumque propter eam non implet bonum propositum, ne offendat eos cum quibus vivit, alia bona peritura et transeuntia diligentes atque sectantes, ab his separatus est omnis sanus, non locis, sed animo; nam locis corpora continentur, animo autem locus est affectio sua.244

244 John E. B. Mayor. “Augustine and Milton,” The Classical Review 8 (1894): 147. “For often the mind which is striving to go on to God-ward, being rudely handled in the very road, is alarmed; and generally fulfills not its good intent, lest its thought offend those with whom it lives, who love and follow after other perishable and transient goods. From such every one that is whole is separated, not in space, but in soul. For the body is contained in space, but the soul’s space is her affection.” Translation is taken from “Church Fathers: Exposition on Psalm 6.” Last modified 2009, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1801006.htm, accessed May 2013. Translated by an anonymous scholar. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8.
Milton’s writings are replete with references to Augustinian theology, but this parallel deserves special attention that it has not heretofore received. Mayor’s quotation above comes from Augustine’s little-read elephantine meditations on the Psalms; Mayor here quotes Augustine’s exegesis of the sixth Psalm’s seventh line, “Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.” It is not to be wondered at that this line, with its emphasis on the fallibility of the eye and its connection between a disorder of the ocular faculties and a spiritual disorder, would have had a particular draw for the blind Milton.

Augustine identifies two possible readings of “enemies”: to be among enemies is to be “either amidst ... vices, or amidst men who will not be converted to God.” That is, one suffers blinding grief either from being among men who do not uphold the virtuous laws of God but instead live for themselves, or from giving way to one’s personal flaws. The majority of the meditation is devoted to the literal enemies who revel in the life of the world and against whom the righteous must ever struggle to champion the life of the spirit. But, at the end of this section, Augustine makes it clear that he has never abandoned his commentary on the individual. The men without virtue are allegories for the
vices that a single human being finds besetting him; the virtuous part of the human is forced to live among his vicious parts.248

In his return to the individual, Augustine explicitly links these contradictory desires, on one hand for the pleasures and comforts of the world, and on the other for ascetic devotion to God, with a dualistic understanding of the human being. Humans are made up of the separate entities of body and soul, and while the body is located in earthly space and time (nam locis corpora continentur) the soul’s space or place (locus) is her own affectio. Affectio here can be rendered into English by its cognate, “affection”; it also has the sense of mood, disposition, feeling, or purpose. Augustine uses the term to describe an elevated emotional state coupled with active agency. The soul’s purpose is to create a safe or pure space where it may reside away from the corporeal realm, and this purpose can only be effected by the soul’s elevated and rational feeling, presumably devotion towards God. In this way, Augustine imagines a space of purity that humans may lay claim to. Just as the righteous man separates himself from the men of the world, the soul separates itself from the earth-bound body to live in its own space, built by affective devotion.249

248 The comparison between two groups of men, one carnal and one spiritual, and the warring impulses at work in one human individual, permeates Augustine’s corpus, and it articulated many times in the City of God, as for example in Book 14: “And thus it has come to pass, that though there are very many and great nations all over the earth, whose rites and customs, speech, arms, and dress, are distinguished by marked differences, yet there are no more than two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities, according to the language of our Scriptures. The one consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, and the other of those who wish to live after the spirit; and when they severally achieve what they wish, they live in peace, each after their kind.” Here, Augustine effectively rewrites Paul, who sees difference as a literary/spiritual device used to illustrate the power of the Resurrection and the effects of grace. Augustine, on the other hand, takes these distinctions literally and figuratively, simultaneously. He seems to truly believe that those men who live for the flesh can be separated from those who live for the spirit, and also to find some measure of fleshly living and spiritual living in every individual.

249 It is worth pointing out that such distance requires an irrevocable division between body and soul. Even the righteous can never devote themselves entirely to God and eschew the temptations of the world. The body’s obligatory locus on Earth not only allows for but effectively requires sensation, passion, and desire, the constituents of worldly vice. Only the soul, one part of the whole being, can separate itself from the earthly impulses that influence the body; the soul creates and inhabits its own space through its emotional project.
Milton’s Satan may be thought simply to misunderstand Augustine’s dualism when he famously proclaims his individual worth by approximating Augustine’s words:

A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n (I.262-264).\(^{250}\)

Ignoring the Augustinian distinction between \textit{mens}, the thinking faculty, and \textit{animus}, the devotional soul, Satan takes up the idea of a split between body and spirit, but crucially mistakes the separate space of the soul for a space of the mind. He imagines that his own generative power of thought can produce a space that is unaffected, untouched, by his geographical location. Though Satan may find himself relegated to one particular corner of the burgeoning universe,\(^{251}\) he claims that his superior mind can transform his experience, building a metaphysical utopia (or dystopia) that he can access at any time and where he can house himself, safely away from punitive cartography. Satan’s crime is the hubris of thinking that he can, though mental exertion, create and occupy that sacred space that Augustine designates as the province of the soul. Satan effectively replaces the creative devotion of the soul with the generative capacities of the mind.

We must acknowledge, then, that Milton here diverges sharply from an orthodox Augustinian trajectory of thought. The prevailing strain of Augustinianism, inflected by Neo-Platonism and passed authoritatively to medieval Catholic philosophers and theologians and then to Luther and Calvin, takes as central to its project the compartmentalization of the human creature. That is, the body of the human, compared above to the men who live for themselves, exists only in the earthly sphere, and is subject

\(^{251}\) Hell is “As far removed from God and light of Heav’n/ As from the center thrice to th’ utmost pole” (I.73-74). That is, Hell is as far away from Heaven as three times the distance from the earth to the “point outside the cosmic sphere closest to heaven” Kerrigan et al, 297.
to the various hungers, excitations, illnesses, pains and pleasures of the flesh. The soul, above represented by the men who live for God, is the spiritual entity of the human creature that is in some way pure or safe from the problematic functions and irrational longings of the flesh. The soul, waifishly disembodied, is the part of the human that may petition for and receive salvation, even as the flesh errs; in his meditation on Psalm 6, Augustine articulates this joyful potentiality of the soul’s devotion to God and its resulting redemption. Milton’s Satan, in reworking Augustine’s meditation, demonstrates that orthodox Augustinianism does not function properly for him. His generative capacity is his thinking and imagining faculty; he therefore reroutes Augustinianism to privilege the mind, which is not nearly as clearly divided from vegetal fleshiness as Augustine’s soul.

Of course, we might explain away Satan’s divergence from Augustinian dualism simply by pointing out that it is Satan who does it; Satan might not be reasonably expected to uphold any orthodox Christian theology. The Satanic reading of Augustine is wrongheaded and heterodox; indeed, the reversed second foot of line 262 undermines Satan’s speech even as he makes it. Moreover, Satan’s claim to intellectual superiority nicely suits the overwhelming ambition to which theological tradition attributes his fall. But, his hubristic reworking of Augustinian dualism actually seems like a truthful and appropriate account of Satan’s phenomenological experience in Paradise Lost and as such is much more difficult to ignore because readers are dependent on the experiential narrations of the first humans, the angels, and even the Miltonic narrator in order to draw any substantive conclusions about the poem. Indeed, Satan’s shift from using the indefinite “a” to the definite article “the” allows us to imagine that Satan is speaking of a universal mind here. It is my claim that Satan does not here present a subversive counterpoint to the
other figures of the poem who experience and describe their adherence to Augustinian understandings of how the human and angelic beings function, but rather an example of how dualism shifts based on the experience of humans, devils, and angels. This shifting reflects Milton’s reworking and interrogation of Augustinian ambivalence with regard to the interplay between body and spirit.

Satan claims that his mind is the thing that can transport him from heaven to hell, and from hell to heaven; this claim seems to be not just a Satanic boast, but an accurate description of Satan’s experiences. Though Satan and his fallen compatriots are relegated to the depths of Hell, the Satanic body is confined by neither a fixed geographical location nor a fixed physical shape. Once having decided on his project, Satan leaves first the fiery lake and then Hell itself without apparent difficulty, and navigates the expanses of the universe as an untaught but determined explorer.\textsuperscript{252} Additionally, much of the poem depends on Satan’s ability to shape-shift at will; he appears a cherubic neophyte to Uriel, and the upright, phallic serpent to Eve.

Milton’s extended similes, too, give a different view of Satan at every turn; he first appears as a deep-sea leviathan (I.200-209), then is variously described in the first few books as a dragon in flight (I.226), a hauntingly suspended trade-ship (II.635-642) and a cormorant, when he perches to observe Eden for the first time (IV.196). These devices move fluidly, almost imperceptibly, from creating images of the Satanic body into affective narratives. Let us consider, for instance, the famed leviathan passage:

\begin{quote}
Him haply slumbering on the \textit{Norway} foam
The Pilot of some small night-founder’d Skiff,
Deeming some Island, oft, as Sea-men tell,
With fixed Anchor in his skaly rind
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{252} For more on Satan and colonial exploration, see Su Fang Ng, “Pirating Paradise: Alexander the Great, the Dutch East Indies and Satanic Empire in Paradise Lost” \textit{Milton Studies}: 52 (2011): 59-91.
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night
Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delayes (I.203-208).

The immensity of the leviathan is most effectively experienced by the reader when he imagines himself to be one of those hapless humans, already imperceptible on a vast sea, and about to moor not, in fact, beside a piece of familiar land, but rather beside the very emblem of that sea's overwhelming and terrifying otherness. Not only does Satan shape-shift for his own purposes and for the plot purposes of the poem, but the poetic simile itself dissolves into a cinematic scene that abandons any attempt to describe dimensions, characteristics, or other identifying features in favor of instilling an affective response in the reader.

There is, then, a double project of the mind surrounding Satan's physical and geographical movements. The Miltonic narrator, like Satan, moves from image to image not to pin down Satan's appearance, but rather in an attempt to communicate the experience of Satan to the reader. The creative powers of the intellect are not limited to Satan's deceptions, but are bound up in the literary project of the poem itself; in order to communicate Satan effectively, the narrator must construct a little world all his own, a world in which shipmen moor beside a whale, or see, disbelieving their eyes, a haunting

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254 In emphasizing the role of the reader, I follow Stanley Fish, whose weighty arguments have lost little over the span of many decades. As Fish notes, it is not simply the readerly position of observer that must be taken into account when thinking through Milton's poetic project, but also her emotional engagement: "I shall argue that the coherence and psychological plausibility of the poem are to be found in the relationship between its effects and the mind of its reader." Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967): 2. I diverge from Fish in my deemphasizing of the role of the fall; for Fish, the reader is engages mentally, psychologically, and emotionally, in order that he might fall again with Adam. I suggest that the affective and cognitive engagement Milton requires of his reader does not necessarily require that he participate in the rupture that Fish describes. It is enough, as above, that she move seamlessly from visual image to narrative player, and indeed often these moments of affective response have little to do with the fall itself.
vessel seemingly flying above the water that should carry it. The Satanic body must be variously compared to divergent images, and these images themselves must fall away in order to make for the reader’s subsumption into a narrative moment and his resulting response. In each case, it is the power of an intellect at work that fashions and refashions the reality of a particular moment, place, space, or body. Satan is not only justified in his claim that he constructs his world with his mind, but the ability to do so is one of the integral projects of the poem as a whole.

A mind, then, be it Satanic or narratorial, is the agent that produces, of its own volition, a change in perceptible reality, and also a change in affect. The soul’s space of the affection, its emotional construction project, is taken up and repurposed by a narrator who builds new worlds to imagine, and powerfully drives his ideas home by choreographing affective responses to his images which then slip away; the great strength of the leviathan passage is the vertigo, the stomach-dropping wonder, that the reader-as-sailor experiences. The Satanic misreading of Augustinian dualism is therefore legitimized and even employed by a divinely-authorized, muse-driven and human poetic voice. The project of reworking Augustine is, then, in some way central to the poem as a whole.

There exists, of course, a figure in Paradise Lost for whom the dualistic distinction between body and soul is much more truthful than it is for Satan, because his lived experience maps neatly onto those orthodox teachings. Raphael functions in the poem as a veritable Augustinian mouthpiece. His directives to the first humans, as we shall see, adhere with painstaking accuracy to Augustine’s descriptions of Adam and Eve, the various ways in which their distinct and divided bodies and souls should function, and what their behaviors in the garden, dependent on that split, should therefore be. As I shall
demonstrate, Raphael’s physicality, though subservient to his intellectual properties, is powerfully present and is in fact necessary for him to serve as interlocutor with Adam. Raphael is inherently suited to communicating Augustinianism to Adam and Eve because he experiences what an authoritative Augustinian tradition imagines to be the natural life of the first humans before the fall.

In making the above observation, I break with the tradition of Milton critics who read Raphael as an embodiment of Milton’s monism. Harold Bloom, William Kerrigan, Stephen Fallon, William Walker, and Phillip J Donnelly, among others, employ Milton’s articulation of the intimate and inseparable intertwining of body and spirit in his De Doctrina Christiana as a truth that undergirds much of Paradise Lost and, specifically, the authoritative communications of Raphael. In his award-winning Milton among the Philosophers, Fallon describes Raphael as wholly committed to the project of monism:

“Milton’s conception of angels derives from his ontological assumptions. The central proof text for the materiality of angels in Paradise Lost, and one that makes explicit the monist basis of that materiality, is Raphael’s speech on the ‘one first matter.’” Even critics like John Rogers, who attempt to reconcile the angel’s monism with the hierarchies he establishes between matter and non-matter, suggest that such moments are remnants of a


256 The idea that the spirit of man is separate from his body, so that it may exist somewhere in isolation, complete and intelligent, is nowhere to be found in scripture, and is plainly at odds with nature and reason.

divisive dualism that cannot be wholly excluded from an otherwise utopian monism.\textsuperscript{258} I shall suggest here that Raphael does not function successfully as an angelic embodiment of materialist unity; instead, I claim that Raphael proclaims a dualism that makes phenomenological sense to him, but does not function so well for his human auditors.

Raphael’s body is both material and ethereal and, like Satan, he can shift his appearance depending on his errand. In the air, he appears as a giant golden phoenix (V:272), but once on land and approaching Eden, he “to his proper shape returns” (V: 276) so that he appears to Adam and Eve in the form of god-like man, broad-shouldered and strong, with six wings, some of which veil his genitals and thighs from sight. The wonder of these golden wings and especially the over-modest insistence that intimate regions be shielded from view emphasize the angel’s physicality. Indeed, much of Raphael’s existence depends on his ability to enjoy pleasures associated with the physical. As Joad Raymond demonstrates, heaven’s “most essential aspect” is a pleasure that is predicated upon the experience of its angels.\textsuperscript{259} Heaven is filled with unceasing angelic song, sung in shifts while other angels sleep in their tents. Moreover, heaven is bright, filled with light and pleasant breezes, and also includes “fine dining and sexual embraces.”\textsuperscript{260} Raphael’s body is meticulously designed to absorb and enjoy each of these qualities of his heavenly home.

We are carefully shown, however, that the angelic body is not an earthly body; even Raphael’s physical beauty separates him from the humans. Raphael’s habits of eating, moving, and even his modes of conversation parallel Adam’s in ways that delineate the

\textsuperscript{260} Ibid.
respective superiorities and inferiorities of each. Raphael explicates his divine digestive capacities when Eve prepares a table to share with her heavenly guest:

Therefore what he gives
(Whose praise be ever sung) to man in part
Spiritual, may of purest Spirits be found
No ingrateful food: and food alike those
Intelligential substances require
As doth your Rational; and both contain
Within them every lower facultie
Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,
Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,
And corporeal to incorporeal turn. (V.404-413)

Raphael’s speech seems to be a straightforward and thoughtfully descriptive reassurance, responding to Eve’s hospitable solicitation. He distinguishes between his intelligential and the human rational bodies, but demonstrates that, far from an activity associated with decay and corruption of matter, for him the consumption of food is an act of sublimation. That is, he can take matter that is only in part spiritual, only in part pure, and transform it into non-matter: not nothingness, but something purely spiritual, something that is no longer tangible. Raphael, then, is a mediator of sorts between the physical and the spiritual, just as he mediates between God and man in this conversational visit.

We must note, however, that though Raphael mediates, it is always the spiritual that takes precedence over the physical. Matter is improved by becoming non-matter; the incorporeal is ever superior to the corporeal. It is clear from Raphael’s lecture on angelic digestion that he subscribes to an ascending ladder of valued principles and correspondingly valued substances. Matter is on the lowest rung, corresponding with inanimate objects, with food, and potentially with animals; rationality is second, needing matter but unable to transform it into non-matter; intelligentiality is third, uniting matter,

\[261\] For more on Eve’s domestic prowess and its influence on her behavior and inner state, see Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Politicizing Domesticity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
rationality, and transcendence. Raphael does not code any of these substances as bad or evil, but some are clearly better than others. The goal, then, for the angel, is to transform that which is physical into that which is purely spiritual. Indeed, the angelic body itself seems to function like the food that Raphael literally transubstantiates. Though described as his “proper” shape, Raphael’s all-too-familiar winged body seems carefully constructed to elicit the proper responses of awe, submission, and friendly attention from the humans in Eden. His shape is, as it were, a gloss on his speech, analogous to his readily comprehensible methods of explaining life on heaven to those living on earth.

Raphael, therefore, like the other angels, truly embodies the Augustinian dualistic ideal. Through his devotion to God and constant obedience to all mandates spoken and unspoken, Raphael’s soul is the essence of his being, and his corporeality is simply a metaphorical device he employs to turn matter, whether it be food, language, or even ideas, into incorporeal spiritual non-matter. Raphael truly does possess a soul with its own generative abilities, that transports Raphael from world to world, and from matter to non-matter with ease. The corporeality that seemed so important to his liminal status falls away when any of Raphael’s transformative processes are employed.

The angelic messenger champions his ability to engage in sensory endeavors that are governed entirely by his rational capacity. While digestion provides one avenue for the kind of sublimation he is naturally able to accomplish, Raphael’s sex life functions as another compelling example of the benevolent dictatorship of his soul over his body and, as we shall see, another point of comparison with Adam’s experiences. Adam, somewhat shyly and circuitously, asks Raphael whether he and the other angels have sex. Raphael responds “with a smile that glowed Celestial rosie red” (VII.618-619) that whatever
humans enjoy on earth, angels enjoy even more. Raphael’s description mimics his response to Eve’s hospitable queries; he tells Adam that every pure entity may be enjoyed, with or without a human body:

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 bars:
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.622-629).

Here, the angel overrides the difficulties of the physical body with his soul, engaging in purely rational, and presumably purely spiritual, even devotional, sex. In doing so, Raphael articulates the kind of sexuality Augustine imagined for pre-lapsarian humans; Augustine imagined that through control, bodies would cease to be impediments to physical intercourse, and physical intercourse could be effectively sublimated into a rational and spiritual expression of love.

Before man’s disobedience, Augustine suggests that Adam and Eve, and the progeny they would have spawned, would have engaged in procreative intercourse without the complications of desire or lustfulness being involved at all:

The man, then, would have sown the seed, and the woman received it, as need required, the generative organs being moved by the will, not excited by lust. For we move at will not only those members which are furnished with joints of solid bone, as the hands, feet, and fingers, but we move also at will those which are composed of slack and soft nerves: we can put them into motion, or stretch them out, or bend and twist them, or contract and stiffen them, as we do with the muscles of the mouth and face... And therefore man himself also might very well have enjoyed absolute power over his members had he not forfeited it by his disobedience (14.24).

According to this description, sex, like everything else in the pre-lapsarian paradise garden, was an action perfectly fitted to the human beings that inhabited that sanctuary. It was cause neither for elation nor despair, for neither longing nor revulsion. It was simply action that, like all other actions, demonstrated the human being’s perfect control over all
of his or her faculties. Pre-lapsarian human life was therefore characterized by the absolute rule of human will over the absolutely submissive human body. The will controls movements of fingers and toes, penises and vaginas. The warring impulses of worldliness and ascetic righteousness were not, therefore, present in Augustine’s Adam and Eve. Because everything, even sex, was utterly controlled by reason, the soul needed no escape. The pure space of the affectio was a real and literal space: the space of the garden. Bodies, as well as souls, could then inhabit it.

It is precisely this time of ordered, reasonable, and rational sex that Raphael claims he already naturally experiences. Indeed, Raphael takes up Augustine’s language, overriding the problematic chafing and awkward position changes of bodies themselves with the acrobatic synthesis of rational and physical. The obstacles of “membrane, joynt, or limb” fall away in favor of a devotional exercise of adoration.

Poole, Turner, Fiore and Picciotto are therefore not incorrect to locate Augustinian theorizations of pre-lapsarian dualism and, especially, of pre-lapsarian sexuality, in Milton’s garden. It certainly does exist therein; an almost perfectly articulated Augustinian experience of the body, and specifically of sex, may be found in Raphael’s phenomenological experiences. We would be mistaken, however, to attribute Augustinian theories of the pre-lapsarian human to Milton’s Adam and Eve. We have already seen digestive processes function as a way to differentiate between human and angelic bodies. Similarly, Raphael and Adam come to present themselves as engaging in radically different sexual behaviors. Adam takes advantage of his first conversation with a masculine being.

Augustine describes the process of intercourse in masculine terms; it is Adam’s “slack and soft” member that would have “stretched out” and “stiffened” according to his will. We may, however, still include Eve in this paradigm. It must be assumed that her genitals, like Adam’s, would be mobilized by her will.
other than God, and especially the masculine-inscribed after-supper space, to communicate
to Raphael the wonders of his marriage bed. Adam explains that his first sexual union with
Eve was superior to all other pleasures he had experienced:

In all things else delight indeed, but such
As us'd or not, works in the mind no change,
Nor vehement desire, these delicacies
I mean of Taste, Sight, Smell, Herbs, Fruits and Flours,
Walks, and the melodie of Birds; but here
Farr otherwise, transported I behold,
Transported touch; here passion first I felt,
Commotion strange, in all enjoyments else
Superiour and unmov'd, here onely weake
Against the charm of Beauties powerful glance (VIII. 524-533).

For Adam, pleasure is sensory. He articulates all of the aspects of life in the garden that he
enjoys based on their appeal to his senses, and explains that before his union with Eve, he
had participated in the pleasures of eating, of seeing beautiful things, of smelling the
fragrant plant life of his paradisal home, and of hearing the songs of the birds, but
heretofore had not experienced the pleasures of touch. Touch, then, is equated with sex. It
seems that touching the fruits of the garden, or the tactile enjoyments of working the land
or of interacting with Adam’s environment do not suffice as the true sensory pleasure to be
had from touch. Touch is inherently sexual, and sex itself is superior to all other pleasures.

Touch, specifically sexual touch, has a power that the other senses cannot afford
Adam. Touching can transport;\textsuperscript{263} though Adam and Eve do not leave their floral bower,
Adam describes his first experience of sex as a physical movement. He is taken from one
state, a pleasant if tepid state that exists before meeting Eve, and relocated in a new realm,
a new state, a new reality.\textsuperscript{264} This new state is characterized by commotion, by some

\textsuperscript{263} My understanding of the power of touch in \textit{Paradise Lost} is deeply indebted to John Roger’s account in his
“Transported Touch.”

\textsuperscript{264} We may contrast this state of Adam’s in \textit{Paradise Lost} with Marvell’s utopian garden, in which Adam
thrives in his solitary paradise. Marvell’s Adam experiences all sensory pleasures, including touch: “The
measure of discordance possibly, but in it all pleasures are amplified, superior to what they were before. In it also, Adam is for the first time uncertain of his superiority. Though created ruler of the animal kingdom, and cognizant of his prescribed superiority over his wife, he finds himself here enraptured by her beauty, by her sexual attractiveness, and by her seeming wholeness that stands in juxtaposition to his newly fragmented desire; he describes Eve as “in herself compleat,” (VIII.548) whereas Adam roils in a newly amplified emotional state.

Raphael is not pleased with Adam’s exuberance; with “contracted brow,” (VIII.560) he rebukes Adam for his feelings, explaining that humans are set above animals by nature of their reason, and because they have the capacity to be rational even in sensory pleasure. Should a human abandon himself to pleasure of the senses entirely, forsaking reason in favor of all-consuming enjoyment, he forsakes his own character. He explains that Adam is free to love, and indeed should love, as an expression of his humanity and his goodness, but that he should not allow himself to be overcome:

In loving thou dost well, in passion not,  
Wherein true Love consists not; love refines  
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat  
In Reason, and is judicious, is the scale  
By which to heav’ly Love thou maist ascend,  
Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause  
Among the Beasts no Mate for thee was found. (VIII.588-594)

Passion, the term that Adam uses and Raphael repeats, is the term for problematic, overwhelming feeling. It is a way of describing the transporting nature of touch. For this reason, Adam is not in danger of being overcome by his enjoyment of any other sensory nectarine and curious peach/ Into my hands themselves do reach.” Andrew Marvell, The Garden (V:5-6). Marvell’s Adam is an experimentalist, like Milton’s, but his state is infinitely preferable before he is joined by his female companion; Milton’s Adam finds pleasures elevated through his communion (sexual and otherwise) with Eve.
pleasures. He can experience all of them while maintaining his rationality, here coded as his geographical space. But, when he is transported by sexual touch, he is removed from the rational realm to a passionate realm where reason is either altogether abandoned, or is at least subordinated to sensation.

If, indeed, Adam and Eve’s sex lives before the fall are characterized by a perfect adherence to Augustinianism, then Raphael could only be expected to celebrate the perfect superiority of soul to body, the glorious harmony of a purely rational rule of sensory pleasure. Raphael does, however, have legitimate grounds on which to question Adam’s obedience to Augustinian strictures. Adam’s experience is indeed one of articulated passion, described as the overwhelming triumph of a transporting touch over all other aspects of himself. His passion therefore fragments him, driving him to compare his desiring self with the gestalt of a complete Eve he sees before him. It must be clear, then, that the Augustinian conception of Edenic sexual politics does not wholly guide Milton’s Adam and Eve.

Adam’s “transporting touch,” is truthful to his own experience, despite being out of keeping with Raphael’s sense of righteous self-governance. As we have begun to see, Adam and Eve’s phenomenological experiences, and particularly their sexual experiences, do not comply with Raphael’s experiential Augustinianism. Adam already experiences passion, a passion that elevates his sensory responses and that transports him, that alters his reality. Touch, then, functions for Adam just as the mind functions for Satan, and the soul for Raphael. As John Rogers powerfully articulates in his chapter “Transported Touch: The Fruit of Marriage in Paradise Lost,” the human mechanism of touching emphasizes the physical relationship between Adam and Eve and the arbitrary nature of the fall. I suggest
an even more profound connection between Edenic touch and an undermining of the fall. Passion by nature arises spontaneously, and is not the product of rationality, even if joyful rationality. Adam describes a physical sensation that inspires his body to a reaction that he cannot plan for, and that compromises his ability to think clearly. Impulsive and spontaneous passion is constitutive of Adam and Eve’s sex life, even and especially before the fall.

I suggest that the invocation of a sexual touch that transports, that functions for humans as the generative mind does for Satan, and the generative soul for Raphael, is alive and well after the first humans partake in the forbidden fruit. Their erotic lives, playful, passionate, messy, disruptive, and joyful, are not much altered by the fall. Indeed, both the first sexual union after creation, and the first sexual union after disobedience are initiated by a touch of hand to hand. It is the same companionate gesture, this same “transporting touch,” that Adam and Eve rely on when they are ushered out of the garden: “They hand in hand with wand’ring steps and slow/Through Eden took their solitary way” (XII 648-649). Milton’s humans do not undergo the radical transformation that Augustinian theology mandates; passion does not spring up as a physical manifestation of rational disobedience. Instead, passion was always already present in the garden, and the touch of human to human, which Raphael can never understand, not only constitutes their primary experiences, but also triumphs as their sustaining grace.
Bibliography


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