

THE TRAGIC ELEMENT IN PARADISE LOST

by

HELGA LISEC

---

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1967

Approved by:

  
Major Professor

LD  
2008  
K4  
1167  
L545  
c.2

CONTENTS

THE TRAGIC ELEMENT IN PARADISE LOST . . . . . 1  
LIST OF WORKS CITED . . . . . 33

## THE TRAGIC ELEMENT IN PARADISE LOST

"I now must change [these] Notes to Tragic"; from Milton's own words at the opening of Book Nine we may infer that he intended the action of Paradise Lost to encompass a human tragedy. While in the great epics before Milton a tragedy might have been embedded in the form of an episode, as for example the Dido episode in the Aeneid, in Paradise Lost the tragedy seems to be the center of the whole design. Mr. Hagin proposes that "in abandoning Arthur as his epic hero and in the treatment of the fall of man Milton rejected the very essence of heroic poetry -- the constant, spectacular character -- in favour of one confronted with inward and outward distress (and this, of course, is applicable both to Adam and Eve and Satan). But thanks to the singular possibilities of this particular subject, in which the sublimity and the pettiness of human existence are so closely and naturally tied up with one another, Milton can tell us what is perhaps the only story in which God and man -- because of their mutual, if unequal, integrity -- are the components of a truly dramatic relationship."<sup>1</sup> This relationship between God and man can become dramatic only if the "integrity" -- self-consistency -- of one or both of the participants is disturbed by an action that alters their relationship and initiates a tragic rhythm.

Milton conceived of the Fall in terms of this dramatic relationship. When he came to treat of the Fall, he availed himself of this fundamental pattern -- man destroying and regaining his integrity against the background of the absolute integrity of God.

The destruction and recovery of man's integrity is expressed in action, the very kind of action which Aristotle defined as tragic.<sup>2</sup> In this view, tragedy represents a critical phase of human life in which certain persons are put into significant conflict and commit an action which leads to disaster. It commonly arises through a choice which the protagonist has to make and the consequences this choice will bring to him and, maybe, to the group associated with him. He has to suffer for his choice and acknowledge that in part, at least, he brought the suffering on himself. Therefore the protagonist has to realize that, as Professor Mitchell A. Leaska puts it, "he is a conscious agent free to choose the course of action that best suits his life, aware all the while that his choice of activity exists only in relation to other free, conscious agents. He must know too that he as well as they are responsible for their actions."<sup>3</sup> He evaluates his tragic situation "and before his end comes, he learns that the decision he made was the wrong one. Only with this awareness can there be enlightenment, that final illumination that transforms the suffering of the human mind into the truth deeper and more ultimate than the vision of reality with which we live out our own lives."<sup>4</sup> We will have tragedy when the human mind "inquires, sees, suffers, and learns."<sup>5</sup>

In order to establish a new integrity man recreates a new self. This recreation demands his highest effort, testing out the limits of his strength -- only through suffering that almost transcends human capacity can he succeed in creating himself

newly. But this new creation can only be accomplished if man knows himself, knows the reason and the consequences of his downfall. When the new integrity is established, he very often cannot bear his old human life any more -- this is the reason why so many tragedies end in death; the great suffering the protagonist has undergone and the insight he has gained make it impossible for him to go on living in the old way. Death may be said to come as a relief and not as a punishment to him. In this lies the greatness of tragic Man: that he can go outside his own self and, for a moment, become the omniscient spectator of his "own drama."

Books Nine and Ten of Paradise Lost exhibit, with modifications that will appear later, such a pattern of destruction and recovery, centering in the Fall itself, and bringing both anguish and insight to the transgressors. It is this which provides the crucial phase of the poem; and our task will be to trace it through the developing action, showing how it affects the presentation of the persons and how it fits into Milton's epic plan to "assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the wayes of God to men" (I, 25-6).<sup>6</sup>

## I

In the Ninth Book of Paradise Lost Milton tells us that he decided on his subject after "long choosing, and beginning late" (IX, 26). The earliest indication of his interest in this specific subject we find in the Cambridge Manuscript, in a part written shortly after his return from Italy, where he furnishes "Outlines for Tragedies" concerning Old Testament Themes, New Testament Themes, British Tragedies, and Scotch Stories.<sup>7</sup> Four entries concern the theme of "Paradise Lost." The first two give a list of "the persons" without any title, while draft three bears the title "Paradise Lost" and presents a short outline, divided into five acts by a chorus of angels. In the fourth draft the original title, "Adam's Banishment," is changed to "Adam unparadiz'd"; a short summary is given without any indication of a division into acts. In the first draft we find "the serpent," though crossed out, listed together with Adam and Eve, while "Lucifer" exists as a separate character; this indicates that Milton was at first considering putting the scene of the Fall itself on the stage. In the second draft "the serpent" is omitted altogether. The third and fourth drafts contain neither the act of the Fall itself nor Adam and Eve in their state of innocence. In the third draft Moses, as the speaker of the prologue, excuses and explains this difficulty that spectators "cannot see Adam in this state of innocence by reason of thine sin." The human pair is the focus of the first three acts, but they do not enter until after the Fall in act four. Only

through Satan's glorying in the seduction of mankind do we learn of the Fall. The fifth act presents their expulsion from Paradise; allegorical figures presenting the evils of the world frighten Adam and Eve, while "Faith, Hope, and Justice" comfort them. In the fourth draft "some angel" informs the chorus about the Fall. Adam and Eve spend their time in mutual accusations, when Adam tries to blame Eve wholly for what has happened. Their repentance occurs only after "the Angel" is sent to banish them and presents "a mask of all the evils of this life & world." In this draft there is at least some action indicated on the part of Adam and Eve, while the former shows them as completely passive and acted upon by the forces of good and evil. Interesting in connection with the title "Adam unparadiz'd" is the fact that Milton, occupied with Adam and Eve's quarrel and repentance, does not convey any notion about their actual expulsion from Paradise. If we combine the third and fourth draft, we get, as Milton points out at the end of "Adam unparadiz'd," a five-act choric drama preceded by a prologue.<sup>8</sup> From the number of allegorical figures and the passivity of the human pair Robert L. Ramsay concludes that these "early drafts demonstrate that what Milton began in 1640 was not an epic, nor even, except in external form, a classical tragedy, but a morality play; and a play containing not only one of the old morality plots...but three of them in combination."<sup>9</sup> If we consider the third draft, we find in Act One "the Debate of the Four Daughters of God," in Acts Two, Three, and Four "the conflict of the Vices and Virtues," and in

Act Five "the Coming of Death."

That a fifth plan existed is related by Edward Phillips, Milton's nephew, who quotes Satan's address to the sun in Book Four (32-41) as the beginning of this tragedy.<sup>10</sup> This version might have presented a dramatization of the Fall and thus come closest to the construction of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, but we do not know.

Why is it then that Milton turned from a choric drama to the epic? The Fall itself occurred offstage in the early drafts because of two technical difficulties. The speaking serpent of Genesis is, of course, one of the main actors. "Milton's feeling against an animal actor," speculates Professor Gilbert, "may have been among the reasons that led him to abandon tragedy for epic, in which the distinguished Tempter could play his part with dignity."<sup>11</sup> The serpent actor obviously would have damaged a dramatic production even to the degree of making it involuntarily comic. But a weightier consideration is that it would be virtually impossible to present dramatically a human being in the state of innocence. Milton was aware of this from the very beginning and brought Adam and Eve on the stage only after the Fall; thus in the early versions he had to forego the possibility of showing their inward development and motivating their transgression "psychologically." But, in Professor Gilbert's opinion, "to write a dramatic Paradise Lost without showing the taking of the fruit seems like playing all around the main action without actually touching it."<sup>12</sup> With the conversion of the



choric drama into the epic Milton could "enact" the Fall in its minutest detail; James Holly Hanford emphasizes that "the actual temptations and fall...could in the epic be represented with adequate emphasis on motive and with the full dramatic effect of Elizabethan tragedy."<sup>13</sup>

In Paradise Lost, as we have it now, the Fall is represented in Books Nine and Ten; we can see that despite the adoption of a narrative form, there is a constant impression of dramatic enactment, as though Paradise constituted a stage where the main actors are Adam and Eve, Satan, and the Son of God who passes judgment on all three. This segment of the poem is not, of course, a play in any theatrical sense, but it draws much of its vividness from the sequence of clearly visualized 'scenes' into which it is arranged. Considering only the action taking place in Paradise, we find a unity of time, action, and place in the human drama displayed here. The stage setting is presented in beautifully descriptive passages like the one of Eve's retreat:

Eve separate he spies,  
Veild in a Cloud of Fragrance, where she stood,  
Half spi'd, so thick the Roses bushing round  
About her glowd, oft stooping to support  
Each Flour of slender stalk, whose head though gay  
Carnation, Purple, Azure, or spect with Gold,  
Hung drooping unsustaind (IX, 424-30).

Beside the setting we find also "stage directions" denoting the difference in scenes, the appearance of the main characters, their actions, and finally the time of day as the drama proceeds.

The very beginning of the drama with Satan's entrance "involv'd in rising Mist" reminds us of the elaborate stage

machinery of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, especially in the production of masks. It is midnight and Satan's address to the earth provides the exposition for the drama; he recapitulates what has happened so far -- the creation of the world for man to inhabit, his own rebellion, his intention of seducing mankind and using the serpent for his purpose. Three successive scenes lead us up to the Fall, always well marked by "stage directions" indicating entrances and exits.

Now when as sacred Light began to dawne  
... forth came the human pair. (IX, 192; 197)

Thus begins the first scene, Adam and Eve's dispute about working separately. Eve, having indicated the place of her work as "yonder Spring of Roses intermixt/ With Myrtle" (IX, 218-9), exits -- "she...Betook her to the Groves" (IX, 388), while Adam pursues "Her long with ardent look." The next scene brings Satan in the serpent's disguise onto the stage again; having looked for the pair, he rejoices in finding Eve separate and describes her to us, contrasting her beauty with Adam's "higher intellectual." After Satan gets Eve interested in the "talking snake" and the Tree of Knowledge, we feel the climactic change of scenes because of Eve's remark "Lead then": which brings us to the most important scene in front of the Tree of Knowledge.

Satan, having shown some display of action already when he tried to catch Eve's attention at the start, now develops all his "acting abilities" to convince and seduce her.

The Tempter...

New part puts on, and as to passion mov'd,  
 Fluctuats disturb'd, yet comely and in act  
 Rais'd, as of som great matter to begin.  
 As when of old som Orator renound  
 In Athens or free Rome, where Eloquence  
 Flourish'd, since mute, to som great cause adress'd,  
 Stood in himself collect'd, while each part,  
 Motion, each act won audience ere the tongue,  
 Somtimes in highth began, as no delay  
 Of Preface brooking through his Zeal of Right.  
 So standing, moving, or to highth upgrown  
 The Tempter all impassion'd thus began.  
 (IX, 665; 667-8)

After his speech Eve is spellbound and stands fixed, gazing at the fruit. It is noontime; Eve plucks the fruit and eats. Simple though these actions may seem, they carry a tremendous weight which is immediately expressed in the response of nature herself. The serpent slinks back into the thicket while Eve's actions become hasty and disorganized. The earlier charm and tranquillity of her movements is gone; she 'ingorges the fruit greedily without restraint' and bids 'low reverence' to the tree.

This scene combines all three actors, though they do not all meet. Adam enters the scene divining something ill already. After learning the dreadful news, he seems to go apart with horror.

The fatal Trespass done by Eve, amaz'd,  
 Astonied stood and Blank, while horror chill  
 Ran through his veins, and all his joynts relax'd;  
 From his slack hand the Garland wreath'd for Eve  
 Down drop'd, and all the faded Roses shed:  
 Speechless he stood and pale, till thus at length  
 First to himself he inward silence broke.  
 (IX, 889-95)

Eve's immobility and change of passion is here repeated to a much higher degree; the response of nature, after Adam has eaten

the fruit, is much more emphatic too. As Eve was led onto the scene by the serpent, so she is now led off by Adam to a "shadie bank,/ Thick overhead with verdant roof imbowr'd" (IX, 1037-8).

Here the exact separation into scenes comes to an end. The inner confusion of the human pair is reflected in the "dimming" of the scenes, the loss of their clear sight being indicated thus through the blurring of the stage. Adam and Eve hide themselves in the thickest wood under the figtree out of whose leaves they make coverings for themselves. They sit down, weep, and quarrel.

Thus they in mutual accusation spent  
The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning,  
And of thir vain contest appeer'd no end. (IX, 1187-9)

From here until the end of Book Ten not very much outward action occurs. Adam and Eve "come forth" in Book Ten at God's command while no specific description of scene is given; only the time of day is indicated -- "The Eevning coole" (X, 95).

While the first "three scenes" in Book Nine show very much controlled action, followed right after the Fall by a short period of hectic, agitated movements, the last "two scenes" in Book Ten (after the judgment by the Son of God) are almost void of action; there is only quarreling, weeping, and remorse. The lack of outward movement, indicated also by the "blurring" of the scenes, draws our attention more to the inward struggle of the human pair and focusses wholly on their suffering. A last change of scene is indicated when they

Repairing where he judg'd them prostrate fell  
Before him reverent, and both confess'd  
Humbly thir faults, and pardon beg'd, with tears

Watering the ground, and with thir sighs the Air  
 Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign  
 Of sorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek.  
 (X, 1099-1104)

Thus in Books Nine and Ten we learn of the Fall of Adam and Eve and its immediate consequences. Do Adam and Eve gain tragic stature and can we call them the heroes of the Fall and at the same time the heroes of the whole epic poem? Adam and Eve, as the only human beings, already fulfill the first demand of tragedy which is that it should concern the affairs of human beings -- should be, as Aristotle says, an imitation of human action. Adam and Eve are

The onely two of Mankinde, but in them  
 The whole included Race (IX, 415-6).

Even the choice of Adam's name indicates this universality since Adam means mankind in Hebrew.<sup>14</sup> As to his individual character we might next inquire whether it meets the time-honored Aristotelian demand that a tragic protagonist must be a "good" man, "true to his type," and "consistent or true to himself." Such "goodness" does not mean perfection but rather capacity for noble and serious action; it raises the tragic hero to a certain extent above the common level of humanity, but not so far that the audience loses touch with him. Perfection in either "goodness" or "badness" would not arouse the spectator's compassion. With regard to being an "intermediate kind of personage," intermediate between the ethical extremes manifested by the good and evil angels, John M. Steadman observes truly that Adam and Eve are of all the personae in Paradise Lost the ones most like ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

In order to fit into Milton's plan Adam and Eve could not have been perfectly "good," because if they had been, there would have been no possibility of free choice. Milton himself states in De Doctrina Christiana that man was created with "the liability to fall."<sup>16</sup> Throughout Paradise Lost this point of view is emphasized, not only for man but for all of God's created beings.

I made him just and right,  
 Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.  
 Such I created all th'Ethereal Powers  
 And Spirits, both them who stood and them who fell;  
 Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.  
 Not free, what proof could they have given sincere  
 Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,  
 Where onely what they needs must do, appeard,  
 Not what they would? What praise could they receive?  
 What pleasure I from such obedience paid,  
 When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)  
 Useless and vain, of freedom both despoild,  
 Made passive both, had servd necessitie,  
 Not mee. They therefore as to right belongd,  
 So were created, nor can justly accuse  
 Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate,  
 As if predestination over-rul'd  
 Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree  
 Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed  
 Thir own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,  
 Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,  
 Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknow'n.  
 So without least impulse or shadow of Fate,  
 Or aught by me immutablie foreseen,  
 They trespass, Authors to themselves in all  
 Both what they judge and what they choose; for so  
 I formd them free, and free they must remain,  
 Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change  
 Thir nature, and revoke the high Decree  
 Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd  
 Thir freedom, they themselves ordain'd thir fall.

(III, 98-128)

From the drafts we have seen already that the original state of "goodness" was one of the reasons why Milton did not bring Adam and Eve onto the stage before the Fall. Because this "goodness"

is an inward quality, it would be hard for actors to express the innate goodness of the prelapsarian pair unless this quality could be expressed through outward actions; but we do not know of any significant actions of Adam and Eve before the Fall. Thus the Fall is the great critical moment when Adam and Eve can put their "goodness" to proof and make a significant decision by using their reason and transforming it into action through their will. With regard to God, reason -- 'right reason' in Milton's terms -- commands obedience to God's laws, enforced by faith, constituting a special knowledge that everything happens in accord with a universal law. But at the same time reason also questions this universal law, and may cause man to deny it -- thus falling into sin. This sin is quite frequently expressed by the Greek term hybris, or human pride, by means of which the individual tries to transcend his finite, limited state.

Actually, nearly every philosophy and religion has its own definition of sin. They differ in their respective conception of what constitutes sin -- hybris, as tragedy would have it, or misplaced allegiance, as the Bible maintains. In the development of Christian thought, hybris, under the name of pride, has sometimes displaced the biblical view of sin as misplaced allegiance.<sup>17</sup>

This excessive pride makes man forget that he is a finite being and cannot reach the place of God. The concept of man as the finite and God as the Infinite being is expressed in the idea of order, a hierarchical order of the universe defining the place of each individual with God being the only absolute power in an otherwise relative universe. Adam and Eve were created as human beings within the scale of the ordered universe. Their

relationship to God is expressed by obedience to God's inscrutable command:

This Paradise I give thee, count it thine  
 To Till and keep, and of the Fruit to eate:  
 Of every Tree that in the Garden grows  
 Eate freely with glad heart; fear here no dearth:  
 But of the Tree whose operation brings  
 Knowledge of good and ill, which I have set  
 The Pledge of thy Obedience and thy Faith,  
 Amid the Garden by the Tree of Life,  
 Remember what I warne thee, shun to taste,  
 And shun the bitter consequence: for know,  
 The day thou eat'st thereof, my sole command  
 Transgrest, inevitably thou shalt dye;  
 Shalt loose, expell'd from hence into a World  
 Of woe and sorrow. (VIII, 319-33)

Their obedience to this command can only be proved in a critical situation by their action, based on freedom of choice, not brought about by outward forces as in a morality play.

The consistency of Adam and Eve as "good" human beings is not agreed upon by all critics. Addison, for example, criticizes Milton in this respect.

The whole Species of Mankind was in two Persons at the time to which the subject of his Poem is confined. We have, however, four distinct Characters in these two Persons. We see Man and Woman in the highest Innocence and Perfection, and in the most abject State of Guilt and Infirmity. The two last Characters are, indeed, very common and obvious, but the two first are not only more magnificent, but more new than any Characters either in Virgil or Romer, or indeed in the whole Circle of Nature.<sup>18</sup>

But the consciousness of both sides, good and evil, is expressed in Adam and Eve's words and behavior before the Fall, which show, as Mr. Hagin remarks, that they "did possess the relative perception which according to the symbol of the tree [they were] only to obtain after the transgression."<sup>19</sup> Adam's consideration



of Death as "Som dreadful thing no doubt" (IV, 426), or his advice to Eve "let us not think hard/ One easie prohibition" (IV, 432-3), or Raphael's whole narrative to Adam -- all these are evidences of this strangely limited intuitive understanding in mankind before the Fall.

To the relationship with God, Milton adds the human relationship between Adam and Eve. Here too we find a certain order established. Only after Adam shows his ability to use his reason and free will does God grant him his companion, Eve.

His exercise of reason leads to choice, which leads to action when, through the 'efficiency' of God, the desire of Adam's mind and heart is brought into being. In the last part of the action Adam is a passive participant, but it does not seem unreasonable to say that the creation of Eve constitutes a kind of responsible action for Adam.<sup>20</sup>

Since Adam initiated Eve's creation, Eve as far as reason is concerned will be subordinate to Adam. Raphael pronounces that very definitely when he talks about Adam's passion for Eve:

She is fair no doubt, and worthy well  
 Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love,  
 Not thy subjection: weigh with her thy self;  
 Then value: Oft times nothing profits more  
 Than self esteem, grounded on just and right  
 Well manag'd; of that skill the more thou know'st,  
 The more she will acknowledge thee her Head,  
 And to realities yield all her shows:  
 Made so adorn for thy delight the more,  
 So awful, that with Honour thou maist love  
 Thy mate, who sees when thou art seen least wise.  
 (VIII, 568-78)

Eve herself knows her place when she addresses Adam.

O thou for whom  
 And from whom I was formd flesh of thy flesh,  
 And without whom am to no end, my Guide  
 And Head, what thou hast said is just and right.

For wee to him indeed all praises owe,  
 And daily thanks, I chiefly who enjoy  
 So farr the happier lot, enjoying thee  
 Præminent by so much odds, while thou  
 Like consort to thy self canst no where find.  
 (IV, 440-48)

The Son of God will blame Adam for the destruction of this order after the Fall:

Was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey  
 Before his voice, or was shee made thy guide,  
 Superior, or but equal, that to her  
 Thou did'st resigne thy Manhood, and the Place  
 Wherein God set thee above her made of thee,  
 And for thee, whose perfection farr excell'd  
 Hers in all real dignitie: Adornd  
 Shee was indeed, and lovely to attract  
 Thy Love, not thy Subjection, and her Gifts  
 Were such as under Government well seem'd,  
 Unseemly to beare rule, which was thy part  
 And person, had'st thou known thy self aright.  
 (X, 145-56)

In this framework of order among the human beings and their place in reference to God the action of the tragedy takes place. It is a relationship of love expressed by obedience to the established order.

The first "scene" in Book Nine puts us into the middle of this relationship, and we wait for the critical situation to develop. From the very beginning tragic irony is used to heighten the action. Tragic irony is caused by hamartia, a tragic error, which shall either justify the actions of the hero or, at least, make his fate logical and convincing. In Aristotle's theory hamartia grows out of the plot itself, while Shakespearean tragedy shows it growing out of the characters -- depicting, as Professor Bradley put it, "a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a total incapacity, in certain

circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind."<sup>21</sup> The conflict in Shakespearean tragedy is transferred from the outside action to a conflict in the soul, and it is thus that we see conflict develop in Paradise Lost. The tragic trait in Adam and Eve, their one-sidedness, is foreshadowed in their behavior from the very beginning and can clearly be traced in three major incidents. When Eve views herself in the water right after her creation and finds Adam "less amiable," we are made aware of a sign of an undue self-love in her. By means of the dream which he inspires in her, Satan attempts to instill "vaine hopes, vaine aimes, inordinate desires" (IV, 808) and pride in her. At the beginning of Book Nine her "triumph" of bringing about her separation from Adam makes her self-assertion almost complete. But it is a dangerous triumph showing her inferiority in reason to Adam. Her argument that their daily work would not otherwise be fulfilled shows this already. Work is not an end in itself but rather a sign of man's superiority as the "God of the microcosm," bringing order into nature, but at the same time worshipping God in these actions. As the argument moves on, Eve seems to make a very reasonable point:

If this be our condition, thus to dwell  
 In narrow circuit strait'nd by a Foe,  
 Suttle or violent, we not endu'd  
 Single with like defence, wherever met,  
 How are we happie, still in fear of harm?

But harm precedes not sin: onely our Foe  
 Tempting affronts us with his foul esteem  
 Of our integritie: his foul esteeme  
 Sticks no dishonour on our Front, but turns  
 Foul on himself; then wherefore shund or feard  
 By us? who rather double honour gaine  
 From his surmise prov'd false, find peace within,  
 Favour from Heav'n, our witness from th' event.  
 And what is Faith, Love, Vertue unassaid  
 Alone, without exterior help sustaind?  
 Let us not then suspect our happie State  
 Left so imperfect by the Maker wise,  
 As not secure to single or combin'd.  
 Fraile is our happiness, if this be so,  
 And Eden were no Eden thus expos'd.  
 (IX, 322-41)

Adam accepts Eve's reasoning because her argument seems justified.

But in wanting to separate she takes the first step towards a dissolution of their 'integrity'; she was created for Adam's companionship (VIII, 379-97). She is a part of him, and only together are they a whole and safe. Adam points out that

within himself

The danger lies, yet lies within his power:  
 Against his will he can receive no harme.  
 But God left free the Will, for what obeyes  
 Reason, is free, and Reason he made right,  
 But bid her well beware, and still erect,  
 Least by some faire appeering good surpris'd  
 She dictate false, and misinforme the Will  
 To do what God expressly hath forbid.  
 (IX, 348-56)

But Adam has not realized either that this "integral whole" lies in their togetherness. He sees Eve only as an outward projection, not as part of himself, but as a separate being.<sup>22</sup> This impaired outlook has been brought about by his infatuation for Eve, not love but uxoriousness, against which Raphael warns Adam expressly.

What higher in her societie thou findst  
 Attractive, human, rational, love still;  
 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'nly Love thou maist ascent,  
 Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause  
 Among the Beasts no Mate for thee was found.  
 (VIII, 586-94)

Considering these traits some critics, E. M. W. Tillyard in Studies in Milton (pp. 8-53) and Mrs. Millicent Bell in "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost" (PMLA, LXVIII, 863-83), for example, regard Adam and Eve as fallen already before the eating of the fatal fruit. In Joseph H. Summers' opinion "Adam and Eve still possess their possibilities of freedom and they are still perfect -- not because problems do not exist, but because they can be solved; not because they do not make mistakes, but because they are not fatal."<sup>23</sup> Although Adam's "amorous delight" at Eve's creation turns into "passion" and "commotion strange," indicating a disruption of Adam's equanimity, he still differentiates between Eve's seeming and actually being his superior.

For well I understand in the prime end  
 Of Nature her th' inferior, in the mind  
 And inward Faculties, which most excell,  
 In outward also her resembling less  
 His Image who made both, and less expressing  
 The character of that Dominion giv'n  
 O're other Creatures; yet when I approach  
 Her loveliness, so absolute she seems  
 And in herself compleat, so well to know  
 Her own, that what she wills to do or say,  
 Seems wisest, vertuousest, discreetest, best;  
 All higher knowledge in her presence falls  
 Degraded, Wisdom in discourse with her  
 Looses discount'nanc't, and like folly shewes;  
 Authority and Reason on her waite,  
 As one intended first, not after made

Occasionally; and to consummate all,  
 Greatness of mind and nobleness thir seat  
 Build in her loveliest, and create an awe  
 About her, as a guard Angelic plac't.  
 (VIII, 540-59)

These traits of character, being the main promptings to the ensuing action, will finally work disaster.

Satan's finding Eve alone provides one of those fatal accidents which we find quite often in Shakespeare, as for example, when Desdemona accidentally drops her handkerchief, providing Iago with a vital instrument to enrage Othello against her. When an accident points in the direction already laid down by the logic of the original configuration, it does not thwart the concept of tragedy, but furthers the action and is therefore acceptable. Satan's temptation builds up the scale of intellectual pride, arousing Eve's curiosity first; then, in front of the Tree, offering higher knowledge, fit for Gods, he reinforces it at the same time with an appeal to her beauty, her vanity. Beside the "intellectual appetite" her "sensual appetite" is also aroused by the intense smell of the fruit at noontime, another accident helping the situation. Her decision to eat the fruit is made in expectation of higher knowledge, to reach "Godhead." Her reasoning concerned with Adam shows the disintegration of their relationship and the insecurity of her own isolation. Arnold Stein maintains that she "is impelled, for reasons more profound than she articulates, to become part of Adam's very self again.... The altered image must try to alter what it represents and so construct a new order in these terms."<sup>24</sup> The response of

grief-stricken nature is at the same time the response of our fear, which has built up during the temptation of Satan until Eve commits herself to the act of eating. The suspense that holds our attention till Adam eats also, creates a change from fear to pity when we 'see' Adam's appalled reaction to Eve's story and witness the soliloquy which finally leads to his fall. The pity is reinforced later by the response of the angels in Heaven when they hear of Adam and Eve's transgression.

disples'd  
 All were who heard, dim sadness did not spare  
 That time Celestial visages, yet mixt  
 With pitie, violated not thir bliss.  
 (X, 23-5)

Adam, not being seduced but seeing the alternatives of his choice clearly, God's command and his love for Eve, is consciously choosing Death when he makes his fatal decision:

he scrupl'd not to eat  
 Against his better knowledge, not deceav'd,  
 But fondly overcome with Femal charm.  
 (IX, 997-99)

The clearness with which Adam sees his situation, after he has found out Eve's trespass, lifts him up to the stature of a tragic hero. It is possible for us at this moment to feel the grip of fear while we know at the same time that the fatal decision is bound to come; the wrong choice -- Adam's love for Eve and his wish to join her fate -- lies much closer to our own human level than the right choice -- God's law -- which is inexplicable to us. Either choice seems to deprive Adam of something he values highly; that he chooses the "human value" against God's makes

him tragic in our eyes, because he knows exactly that he is making the wrong choice and will be punished for it.

But as soon as he loses this clear sight of the situation, repeating merely Eve's false reasoning, the tension of the critical situation is gone, the decision made. Adam's tragic error is thus shown as having derived from the overemphasis he puts on his earthly union with Eve. Adam and Eve do not form a "union" after their transgression -- on the contrary. Now they are clearly parted into two separate beings, they are split up into thesis and antithesis, if we use Hegelian terms, and their unity, their new synthesis, can only be brought about by clash of these two parts, transforming or destroying both. Their discovery of the effects of the fruit leads directly to hate, to an inner warfare expressed by mutual accusations.

But the former order, destroyed by the Fall, has to be re-established somehow, a reconciliation of the human pair leading up to the higher reconciliation with God. This new synthesis, though, is not brought about eventually, but has to be earned by a period of suffering. In a morality play man has only to will to be good, and the 'Virtues' assist him immediately, while in tragedy this will has to be put into action -- which is suffering. The main object of Eve's suffering lies on the human level, the disturbance of their love, their matrimonial relationship. Her return to order and obedience is demonstrated by her meek submission to Adam although the latter denounces her. Her beautifully simple and appealing speech "Forsake me not thus, Adam"



opens melodiously to a reconciliation. Adam's suffering is concerned foremost with his relationship to God and the dreadful consequences of his crime. He raves at first against God and almost despairs when he considers death as the punishment for the body leaving open an unknown destiny for the immortal soul.

O Conscience, into what Abyss of fears  
 And horrors hast thou driv'n me; out of which  
 I find no way, from deep to deeper plung'd!  
 (X, 842-44)

After this he turns against Eve:

Out of my sight, thou Serpent, that name best  
 Befits thee with him leagu'd, thy self as false  
 And hateful; (X, 867-69)

He does not realize that he can only make peace with God after having forgiven Eve and having realized the dimension of his guilt. But Eve's "lowly plight" works commiseration in him and leads to a full reconciliation on the human level. They both gain a conviction, though not a complete understanding, of their guilt. Adam's "higher intellectual" becomes obvious when they discuss the means of remedying their transgression, thus indicating Adam's regained superiority to Eve. With the discovery that Satan was hidden in the serpent their change to a new loving relationship is brought about.

But the recognition at the end of Book Ten is only partial and does not give us, the spectator, a sufficient feeling of elevation or release of all our emotions, because Adam and Eve remain on an average human level in their decision to repent and ask God's forgiveness. We miss the greatness of the suffering hero who proves superior to us in the full acceptance of his fate.

Adam provided such a release of our emotions previously when he realized the significance of Eve's fall and could not help choosing the same fatal course. After his wrong decision we do not get this feeling, the union of pity and terror into a single response as I. A. Richards<sup>25</sup> defined it, because Adam and Eve do not gain complete insight into their fault. Only pity for their fate remains, leading us into the realm of domestic tragedy.

## II

Milton reserves the achievement of full knowledge on Adam's part for the last two Books, thus knitting the tragic climax closely into the epic plan, while at the same time underlining Adam's role as the tragic hero. Eve is hardly mentioned throughout the last two Books and her insight depends mainly on Adam's.<sup>26</sup> Already at the beginning of Book Ten we have had an opening up from the narrow stage of Paradise to a tripartite stage: Heaven above, Hell below, and Earth in the middle. In Book Eleven our focus is taken away wholly from Paradise and the action of the human drama unites again with the larger theme of the epic. It directs our eyes back to the whole scope of the universe and reminds us that Books Nine and Ten are not all of Paradise Lost. Can we conclude from the 'middle position' of Paradise and man that this place is the focus of the poem and Adam the hero of the whole of Paradise Lost, or do other characters have a claim to this position?

God himself, though dramatized in a few places, remains "the

absolute, the unchangeable, whose temporarily dramatic position entirely depends on the doings of his subjects. Their free wills turn him into a mere looker-on,"<sup>27</sup> into an omniscient spectator who, though he shows his benevolence in the end, does not act this out, but has it acted out by the parties concerned, Adam and Eve and, of course, the Son of God. From an intellectual point of view the participation of the Son of God is immensely important and heroic in scope. But from the standpoint of dramatic action he is the centre of very few scenes -- the most important one, of course, being the war in Heaven -- and it is almost an impertinence to conceive of him as the centre of human interest.

That position, however, is very frequently claimed for Satan, angel though he be. A relatively temperate modern commentator, Professor Tillyard, has said of the character of Satan that it "expresses, as no other character or act or feature in the poem does, something in which Milton believed very strongly: heroic energy."<sup>28</sup> William Blake's remark in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it and wrote at liberty when he wrote of devils and Hell, has lurked in the minds of critics and readers up to our time. And if we consider the first two Books only, we can easily imagine how this over-valuation of Satan arose.

The poet is handicapped by the nature of his material in that Satan has not the slightest chance of victory. Yet if Satan is to be an adversary worthy of notice, the poet is obligated to develop a character of impressive proportion and even endow him with a number of heroic qualities. Then too, since Adam and Eve are the only mortals in Paradise Lost, the epic adversary must be found in the person of Satan.<sup>29</sup>

If we look at the relationship of these three characters, we can say with Professor Hanford that "the situation of Adam and Eve in relation to Satan is an essential repetition of that of Othello, Desdemona, and Iago -- innocence and love assailed and broken by a villain utterly evil and of superhuman ingenuity."<sup>30</sup>

But how does Satan become this villain? In the very beginning we see him as the grand adversary of God, in his hybris having transgressed God's command, and fighting the Almighty to the last moment.

All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,  
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
 And courage never to submit or yield:  
 And what is else not to be overcome?  
 That Glory never shall his wrath or might  
 Extort from me. (I, 106-11)

Satan's feelings are those of a human being which gain our interest and admiration for his fate. If Milton had just represented evil essentially, Satan would not have come alive as he does through his experiencing conflict and passion throughout the epic. The reader can understand him and feel with him; this is the reason why the first two Books are so fascinating and admirable. The greatness of Satan springs mainly from his physical size and the vast dimensions of space into which he is projected. We find him at the opening of Book One in a "post-tragic" state. "Satan is sublime when he refuses to accept defeat from an omnipotent foe; he ceases to be so in tempting Eve, because here he shows no power but cunning, and we feel not the strength of his cunning but the weakness of his victim."<sup>31</sup> The relationship between God and Satan makes the latter win greatness in our eyes throughout

the first two Books and, to some lesser degree, in the battle scenes of the war in Heaven. From the Emyrean to the bottomless Hell Milton could roll open a vast space in front of our eyes and fill it with the actions of a humanized Satan. But as soon as he gets into contact with Adam and Eve, the Devil's greatness begins to dwindle.

From hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows, and thence to a toad, and finally to a snake -- such is the progress of Satan.<sup>32</sup>

In his function he is man's ally as well as his enemy. "It is he who enables Adam and Eve to appear on the stage at all because their problem can be epically paraphrased by his own."<sup>33</sup> His is the first transgression against the order of the universe and "we are forced to concede that Satan impresses his version more forcibly on us than Man does because the circumstances of his rebellion and fall are not only dramatic but also magnificently epic."<sup>34</sup> Even though Milton draws Satan so admirably in the beginning, he never loses sight of the human pair. From the very start we find recurring references to man, Satan at the same time being turned into an instrument for establishing Adam's prominence in the epic.

When Milton considers the story of the Fall as "sad task, yet argument/ Not less but more Heroic" (IX, 13-4) than the epic battle scenes, we ask, how Adam can compete with the heroic stature of the Satan of the first two Books? In this case we have to look inside the poem and find out what Satan thinks about

his "victim." In Books One and Two man is considered already very favorably (I, 653-4; II, 349-51) and Satan's inferiority in heroic strength is shown in God's sign of the suspended scales (IV, 1010-15) and finally in Satan's own evaluation of Adam:

[His] higher intellectual more I shun,  
 And strength, of courage haughty, and of limb  
 Heroic built, though of terrestrial mould,  
 Foe not formidable, exempt from wound,  
 I not; so much hath Hell debas'd, and paine  
 Infeebld me, to what I was in Heav'n.  
 (IX, 483-8)

This demonstrates Satan's feeling that he is at a disadvantage since in opposing himself to Adam he is opposing himself to God, and we look in vain for the Satan who "stood, / Like Teneriff or Atlas unremov'd" (IV, 986-7). The physical combat that follows Satan's transgression can thus not be fought between Satan and Adam, because they are no equal foes. It is by guile only that Satan can seduce mankind. The diminution of his resources is explained by Milton's theological argument which maintains that Satan has lost his strength through his evil, for evil is weakness -- innocence is strength. We get a demonstration of this point of view earlier in the confrontation of Abdiel and Satan. From the moment Satan decides on the conscious destruction of the human pair in Paradise (IV, 388-94) his final step is taken towards an absolute punishment without hope of God's grace. Mr. Hägin holds that in the act of tempting Eve Satan commits his second offense. "The real importance of this second offense," he says, "lies in its being the first on the grounds of his acquired knowledge of good and evil. This offense is unpardonable."<sup>35</sup> But Satan's seduction of Eve, whose transgression provides

the conflict for Adam, enables God's grace to interfere on man's behalf and create greater good out of evil thus defeating Satan's purpose to revenge himself on God through the destruction of man. His triumphant return to Hell and the gruesome transformation of the devils into monstrous snakes heighten, like a Shakespearean comic subplot, the human drama, and develop into a peripeteia, brought about by God who converts Satan's purpose of ruining mankind into its opposite -- felix culpa. The human pair in suffering this felix culpa prove that "the better fortitude of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" (IX, 31-2) is found in their repentance.

### III

From the moment of God's judgment in Book Ten, "with its veiled promise of restoration in the Woman's Seed, Milton does describe the divine reversal of the devil's action toward an opposite end. As this process will be consummated only with the Last Judgment, Milton is compelled, for the sake of the unities of time and action, to represent its final results in an episode, through the indirect medium of Michael's prophecy, rather than directly in the fable itself."<sup>36</sup>

But does this not destroy the preceding tragedy? The moment we start reading Book XI, we are confronted with a Deus ex machina, "for from the Mercie-seat above/ Preventient Grace descending had remov'd/ The stonie from thir hearts" (XI, 2-4). Does this "cheat" the reader out of his experience of tragedy or was there no tragedy after all?

The inevitability which leaves no room for a "happy ending," -- a destruction of good which can never be restored in its former existence but will end in doom -- is held against a possibility of a Christian tragedy which reserves a final salvation for its hero.

Christian salvation opposes tragic knowledge. The chance of being saved destroys the tragic sense of being trapped without a chance of escape. Therefore no genuinely Christian tragedy can exist. For in Christian plays, the mystery of redemption is the basis and framework of the plot, and the tension of tragic knowledge has been released from the outset with the experience of man's perfection and salvation through grace.<sup>37</sup>

This yearning for deliverance from human suffering and the doom of life into which the tragic hero plunges himself goes together with the hero's knowledge of ultimate truth. To achieve this knowledge he has to act, to realize himself, and in his final destruction he will find redemption and deliverance.

From that point of view, God's intervening grace might seem like a damaging coup de théâtre, critically changing the direction of the supposedly necessary action, the fulfillment of his judgment -- the death of Adam and Eve. God makes death a door to a new and eternal life, thus thwarting the concept of tragedy which calls for an inevitable outcome of the action.

No. At the end of Book Ten, we have not experienced a complete catharsis. Adam has gained knowledge through his suffering and realized the necessity of establishing a new order between himself and Eve. But beyond that the restoration of their relationship to God is necessary; Adam does not know how to establish a new "union" in this case. He does not "understand" God any



more, because of his transgression, while he is able to understand Eve who shares his fate. Only the acceptance of this fate based upon the full knowledge of God's sentence will, in the eyes of the reader, lift him up to a full tragic standing. Milton uses a superb method in giving Adam this full knowledge by making him into a spectator, presenting "a play within a play" -- another Elizabethan feature in this epic, and by bringing about Adam's enlightenment, converting him into a true tragic hero, although a Christian God intervenes to help him to reach his insight.

When Oedipus "sees his position clearly" at the end of Oedipus Rex, he can do so through the knowledge of such events from human experience. Adam does not have this experience, because the effect of his tragedy, the intrusion of death, lies in the future. Thus, in order to gain a full knowledge of death, Adam can only be taught by an outside agent, Michael, what "death" consists of.

A vast stage is set for the playing of the biblical drama, for the portrayal of the causes of Adam's succeeding emotions and utterances. At first the large stage seems to dwarf Adam's significance by reducing the relative importance of Paradise, which for several books has been the locale of all the action; yet, paradoxically, his stature is enlarged from that of one inhabitant of an isolated Paradise to that of the grand progenitor of the whole world of men. His emotions and speeches are now in counterpoise not merely with Eve's but with the vast, panoramic scenes of biblical history.<sup>38</sup>

The film of sin and error is removed from Adam's eyes and his previous clear sight is restored to give him the ability to experience death, not as a participant, but as a spectator, so

that his final illumination coincides with his catharsis in the role of a spectator; at the same time, developing into "the grand progenitor of the whole world," Adam achieves heroic stature in our eyes. By means of "tableaux" presented to Adam by Michael, Adam can experience the different forms of death, and in his reactions we see him learning the human emotions as well. After the first three visions containing Adam's confrontation with the various forms of death and its effect on life, in the Lazar house, Adam almost despairs but Michael consoles him:

Nor love thy Life, nor hate; but what thou livst  
Live well, how long or short permit to Heav'n:  
(XI, 553-4)

Thus the problem of death has turned into a problem of how to master life best which is dealt with in the remaining visions of Book Eleven. Adam has seen enough throughout these pageants that he can imagine the history that Michael is about to reveal in Book Twelve. Besides, his clear sight does not properly belong to a mortal any more, except in moments of highest insight. Adam's realization following the Nimrod episode, the first of Book Twelve, that his transgression also is responsible for the loss of inward freedom, "true libertie" and "right Reason," forms a link from Book Eleven to Twelve, in which the salvation of man will be shown to Adam. History, dogmatic instruction and the promise of Christ as man's savior replace the moral examples of Book Eleven. When Adam finally understands the full meaning of Christ's coming, he is overwhelmed, forgets his guilt for a moment, and states the concept of felix culpa which holds a high

place in Christian theology.

O goodness infinite, goodness immense:  
 That all this good of evil shall produce,  
 And evil turn to good; more wonderful  
 Then that which by creation first brought forth  
 Light out of darkness! full of doubt I stand,  
 Whether I should repent me now of sin  
 By mee done and occasiond, or rejoyce  
 Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,  
 To God more glory, more good will to Men  
 From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.  
 (XII, 469-78)

Here Adam reaches the highest point of insight; the elevation which is one sign at the end of tragedy for the effect of catharsis becomes evident in Adam's reaction. But at the same time it is not an elevation created by man's triumph over his fate; God creates new goodness out of the destruction of goodness.

This is not Milton's final and absolute statement on felix culpa. The paradox is left for us, Adam expressing his joy not in a definite statement, but in a question. John S. Diekhoff affirms this point of view and questions the widespread recent opinion that Milton regarded the Fall as fortunate.<sup>39</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy's statement that "the final state of the redeemed, the consummation of human history would far surpass in felicity and moral excellence the pristine happiness and innocence of the first pair in Eden"<sup>40</sup> cannot be taken as a satisfactory interpretation of the felix culpa in Paradise Lost. That man in his prelapsarian state would have risen in the hierarchy of the universal order by exercising obedience is stated in Raphael's speeches in Book V, 493 f.; VII, 157 f.; VIII, 430, 589. That mankind might conceivably reach this state of eternal bliss notwithstanding the

Fall is the working of God's Mercy and fully realized by Adam. The calm in Adam's final statement can be compared to the outcome of tragedy after long suffering:

Henceforth I learne, that to obey is best,  
 And love with fear the onely God, to walk  
 As is his presence, ever to observe  
 His providence, and on him sole depend,  
 Mercifull over all his works, with good  
 Still overcoming evil, and by small  
 Accomplishing great things, by things deemd weak  
 Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise  
 By simply meek; that suffering for Truths sake  
 Is fortitude to highest victorie,  
 And to the faithful Death is the Gate to Life;  
 Taught this by his example whom I now  
 Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest.  
 (XII, 561-73)

"Here is to be found...the core of greatness in tragedy, the marks by which it may be recognized: the sense of assurance, achieved through suffering, of rational order. Tragedy occurs when the accepted order of things is fundamentally questioned only to be more triumphantly reaffirmed."<sup>41</sup> This triumph of Adam commands our greatest admiration and lifts him up to the level of an epic as well as a tragic hero. Adam's words that he will 'love with fear' indicate that the primary relation with God cannot be regained in the garden. It is also expressed in Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise -- their downfall from a high place, as tragedy demands it, being completed. The waste of good allows only a new order to be established after the human mind has inquired, seen, suffered, and learned; in all these actions man is assisted by God's prevenient grace which can turn good out of evil and bring bliss out of tragedy. Thus 'Paradise' becomes a state of being within Adam and Eve which indicates the

establishment of a new integrity but will always need God's grace to support it.

For a human spectator the tragedy in Books Nine and Ten is most impressive and moving. But Milton in using the epic form in representing the Fall, provides his reader not only with the 'human' point of view but with God's omniscient point of view as well. The divine point of view cannot but turn tragedy into a divine comedy, while Satan's 'revenge tragedy' is turned into a farce. While 'pure' tragedy shows only the struggle and the "triumphant" ending -- man's mastery of his fate through the greatness of his suffering -- it is possible for Milton to show at the same time this tragedy as an integral part of the whole universe, its action arising out of the struggle of particular forces -- Satan on the one side and Adam and Eve on the other -- finally transcended into a higher synthesis. If God had merely meted out justice according to the established law, the destruction of the human pair would have been the inevitable consequence and Paradise Lost would have ended on a 'tragic note.' But man -- so Milton shows us in the rest of his Design -- is assisted by a benevolent God who secures him from this destruction and helps him to establish a new 'integrity,' thus mocking Satan's revenge and protecting his own creation. The tragedy is a part, and a profoundly important part, but not the whole. God's Mercy enables man to become the progenitor of the whole human race in which similar tragedies will take place although without the danger of destroying humanity as a whole; his punishment, death, becomes at the same time a door to a new life in God's presence.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Peter Hägin, The Epic Hero and the Decline of Heroic Poetry, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>See Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, trans. S. H. Butcher, ch. VI, 2.

<sup>3</sup>The Voice of Tragedy, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>All direct quotations from Paradise Lost are taken from the Columbia edition of The Works of John Milton, vol. II.

<sup>7</sup>See John Milton's Complete Poetical Works, ed. H. F. Fletcher, vol. II, 16-7 for the first three drafts; 26-7 for the fourth.

<sup>8</sup>See Allan H. Gilbert, On the Composition of 'Paradise Lost', pp. 14-6.

<sup>9</sup>"Morality Themes in Milton's Poetry," SP, XV (1918), 148.

<sup>10</sup>See Gilbert, pp. 16-7.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>"The Dramatic Element in 'Paradise Lost,'" SP, XIV (1917), 189.

<sup>14</sup>See Ramsay, p. 153.

<sup>15</sup>See "Paradise Lost and the 'Tragic Illustrious,'" Anglia, LXXVIII (1960), 308.

<sup>16</sup>The Works of John Milton, XV, 181.

<sup>17</sup>Nathan A. Scott, The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup>Joseph Addison, "Spectator No. 273," The Spectator, ed. D. F. Bond, II, 563.

<sup>19</sup>Hägin, p. 166.

<sup>20</sup>Arnold Stein, Answerable Style, p. 81.

<sup>21</sup>Andrew Cecil Bradley, "Shakespearean Tragedy," Oxford Lectures on Poetry, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Stein, pp. 98-100.

<sup>23</sup>The Muse's Method, p. 150: We conclude from Summers' presentation that he uses 'perfect' in the sense of 'innocent,' 'not yet fallen.'

<sup>24</sup>Op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>25</sup>See Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 246.

<sup>26</sup>Cf., however, XII, 611-3: For God is also in sleep, and dreams advise,/ Which he hath sent propitious, some great good/ Presaging.

<sup>27</sup>Hagin, p. 150.

<sup>28</sup>Milton, p. 277.

<sup>29</sup>Calvin Huckabay, "Satan and the Narrative Structure in Paradise Lost," Studia Neophilologica, XXXIII (1961), 101.

<sup>30</sup>Op. cit., 189.

<sup>31</sup>Bradley, "The Sublime," op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>32</sup>C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, p. 99.

<sup>33</sup>Hagin, p. 161.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>35</sup>Op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>36</sup>J. M. Steadman, "Peripeteia in Milton's Epic Fable," Anglia, LXXXI (1963), 451.

<sup>37</sup>Karl Jaspers, Tragedy is Not Enough, p. 38.

<sup>38</sup>Lawrence A. Sasek, "The Drama of Paradise Lost, Books XI and XII," Milton: Modern Essays and Criticism, ed. A. E. Barker, p. 349.

<sup>39</sup>See Milton's 'Paradise Lost', p. 127.

<sup>40</sup>"Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," ELH, IV (1937), 162.

<sup>41</sup>Herbert Weisinger, Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall (Michigan State College Press, 1953), p. 266.

## LIST OF WORKS CITED

- Addison, Joseph. The Spectator. Ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Donald F. Bond. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art: With a Critical Text and Translation of The Poetics. Ed. Samuel H. Butcher, Second Edition. London: Macmillan and Co., 1898.
- Bell, Millicent. "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXVIII, (1953), 863-83.
- Bradley, Andrew Cecil. Oxford Lectures on Poetry. London: Macmillan and Co., 1950.
- Diekhoff, John S. Milton's 'Paradise Lost'. New York: Humanities Press, 1958.
- Gilbert, Allan H. On the Composition of 'Paradise Lost'. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947.
- Hanford, James Holly. "The Dramatic Element in 'Paradise Lost,'" Studies in Philology, XIV (1917), 178-94.
- Huckabay, Calvin. "Satan and the Narrative Structure in Paradise Lost," Studia Neophilologica, XXXIII (1961), 96-102.
- Jaspers, Karl. Tragedy is Not Enough. London: Victor Gollancz, 1953.
- Leaska, Mitchell A. The Voice of Tragedy. New York: R. Speller, 1963.
- Lewis, C. S. A Preface To Paradise Lost. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," Journal of English Literary History, IV (1937), 161-79.
- The Works of John Milton. Ed. Frank Allen Patterson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-8.
- John Milton's Complete Poetical Works. Ed. Harris Francis Fletcher. 4 vols. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1943-8.
- Ramsay, Robert L. "Morality Themes in Milton's Poetry," Studies in Philology, XV (1918), 123-58.



- Richards, Ivor Armstrong. Principles of Literary Criticism.  
New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1948.
- Sasek, Lawrence A. "The Drama of Paradise Lost, Books XI and XII," in: Milton: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Arthur E. Barker, New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Scott, Nathan A. The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith.  
New York: Association Press, 1957.
- Steadman, John M. "Paradise Lost and the 'Tragic Illustrious,'" Anglia, LXXVIII (1960), 302-16.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Peripeteia in Milton's Epic Fable," Anglia, LXXXI 3/4 (1963), 429-52.
- Stein, Arnold. Answerable Style. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1953.
- Summers, Joseph H. The Muse's Method. London: Chatto and Windus, 1962.
- Tillyard, E. M. W. Milton. London: Chatto and Windus, 1949.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Studies in Milton. London: Chatto and Windus, 1951.
- Weisinger, Herbert. Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall. Michigan State College Press, 1953.

THE TRAGIC ELEMENT IN PARADISE LOST

by

HELGA LISEC

---

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1967

From Milton's surviving work-sheets for Paradise Lost we learn that he first had in mind a choric drama, one which showed all the signs of a morality play rather than a tragedy. The Fall itself was only to be related by Satan's glorying in his seduction of mankind. But the epic form made it possible for Milton to describe -- virtually to enact -- the Fall and thus to make it the focus of the poem.

This part of Paradise Lost is a tragedy. Books IX and X, on the Fall of Adam and Eve and its immediate consequences, have most of the identifying marks of what we generally regard as tragic: the presence of significant conflict of values in persons of genuine human stature, the choice of a mode of action that brings painful or destructive consequences, the suffering attendant on these, and the victory wrested out of suffering through recognition of its meaning. Eve, as the weaker vessel, is seduced by Satan and helps to produce the main conflict for Adam, which gives him the stature necessary for a tragic hero. Between the heavenly law of obedience and the "earthly law" of romantic love and conjugal compassion a tragic conflict arises for Adam. He makes the fatal decision of his own free will and has to bear the inevitable consequences. Thereupon, Adam and Eve go through a period of suffering that ends only as they gain partial recognition of their deed and are able to repent. Milton shows in his unexpectedly "psychological" treatment of the human pair that he knew exactly what he was doing when he said at the opening of Book IX, "I now must change [these] Notes to Tragic."

It is true, at the same time, that the Fall is not the whole of Paradise Lost -- no more than the grand exploits of Satan are the whole, though many have been somewhat blinded by them. The parts in which Satan seems to be the protagonist, grand though they are, become in the long run subordinate, not primary. By using Satan as a foil for the human pair, Milton shows that "the better fortitude of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" is to be found in the characters of Adam and Eve.

The tragedy fits into the panoramic presentation of the design of God through the whole Creation, ultimately a happy or fortunate design that brings good out of evil, rejoicing out of tragedy. Books XI and XII show the interweaving of the human tragedy with the divine plan. Here Milton introduces the conception of "felix culpa," a loss or destruction of good which is compensated by the gain of a much higher good. "Paradise" has become, at least potentially, a state of being which, after the Fall, could be won only through suffering, repentance, and recognition. But all of this is made possible only through God's superior power of Mercy shown toward mankind.

The central tragic action of the poem is impressive and moving in itself, though in the long run it gains yet a further impact from its subordination to the idea of benevolent justice that it was Milton's primary aim to celebrate.