

Yesterday's Eve and Her Electric Avatar: Villiers's Debt to Milton's *Paradise Lost*

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Abstract

Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, familiar with Milton's *Paradise Lost* through Chateaubriand's translation, owes a greater debt to the English epic than the novelist's use of quotations as epigraphs in *L'Ève Future* would indicate. Villiers's three Eve figures (Alicia Clary, Evelyn Habal, and the android Hadaly) are each in a way permutations of mankind's mother as characterized by Milton. Alicia (a spiritual *femme fatale*), Evelyn (a deleterious temptress), and Hadaly (the Ideal helpmeet and vector of man's spiritual fulfillment) each constitute a refraction of the Eve of *Paradise Lost*, whose complexity seems to have informed their characterization by the nineteenth-century author at a time when translations of the epic abounded in France.

Keywords

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Eve, Villiers, Edison, science fiction, android, French literature, Restoration literature, nineteenth-century novel, artificial intelligence, Genesis, *Ève Future*, Tomorrow's Eve, Eve of the Future

Count Jean-Marie Mathias Philippe Auguste de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam (1838-1889, henceforth Villiers) revered John Milton, as evidenced by his reference to the English author's genius in a satirical tale, "La Machine à Gloire" (*Les Contes Cruels* [1883]), and his unfinished short story, "Les Filles de Milton," published posthumously in 1891.¹ This reverence, corroborated by one of

¹ A translation of "The Glory Machine" may be found in Baldick's *Cruel Tales* 48-63. For a brief overview of "Milton's Daughters," see Redman's *Major French Milton* 18-20 and Conroy 131-33. The latter, in

Villiers's biographers, Alan W. Raitt (327), led Villiers to seek the assistance of Remy de Gourmont at the Bibliothèque Nationale in his research on Milton. Gourmont, a literary critic, essayist, and novelist in his own right, in a letter to Villiers (18 Jan. 1888), makes certain the latter's sustained interest, even as it reveals the early prospect of seeing one of Villiers's more famous novels, *L'Ève Future*, translated into English.²

It is in this novel that one sees more substantial evidence of Villiers's appreciation, not only of Milton the author, but specifically of Milton's own greatest literary achievement, *Paradise Lost*.³ Villiers finally saw the publication of his novel, *L'Ève Future*, in its entirety in 1886.⁴ Its title, rendered in English either as *The Eve of the Future* or *Tomorrow's Eve*, is in itself only the broadest allusion to the legendary mother of mankind, and therefore one must delve deeper in order to discern Villiers's familiarity with John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Nevertheless, at the very least, one can confirm the nineteenth-century author's knowledge of the epic poem by virtue of his using as epigraphs two brief quotations to introduce specific chapters within his novel (considered briefly below).⁵ What might seem a rather minimal appropriation of Milton's work is nevertheless more significant upon a closer examination of the passages within which these excerpts appear.

addition to André Lebois' *Révélateur du Verbe*, also provides a useful and relatively complete account of the author's life and other major works.

² See *Correspondance Générale* 2.452: "Comme renseignements sur mon identité, vous vous souvenez sans doute que je vous avais promis, sur Milton, quelques renseignements qui vous attendent" (210) ("As information on my identity, you doubtless remember that I have promised you some information on Milton that you await.")

³ In her own commentary on "Les Filles de Milton," French critic Chantal Collion Diéricks notes that the story "bears witness to the obsessive influence that the work of the English poet exercised over the esthetic thought of Villiers" (169, translation mine).

⁴ Villiers at first attempted to publish his work incrementally in serial beginning in 1881.

⁵ Although French scholar Gwenhaél Ponnau posits "un véritable système" or "stratégie des épigraphes" in her article "Sur les Épigraphes de *L'Ève Future*" and notes that Villiers quotes from *Paradise Lost*, thereby allying the novel with "[un] mythe fondateur de la chute" (151), she never considers either of the identifiably Miltonic epigraphs specifically *in situ*.

That is not to say, however, that this moment at the very heart of *L'Ève Future* constitutes the sum total of Villiers's debt to *Paradise Lost*; rather, it is the point at which one may begin to investigate more thoroughly the profound degree to which Milton's handling of Eve in the epic influenced the way in which Villiers characterizes his own feminine figures, each of whom demonstrates a certain affinity with the "Daughter of God and Man, accomplished Eve" (PL 4.660).

First, however, it would seem appropriate to note that during Villiers's lifetime some fifteen printings of François René de Chateaubriand's translation of the epic appeared, and that American critics would seem to have rediscovered the novel *L'Ève Future* only in the wake of its first translations into English by Marilyn Gaddis Rose (1981) and Robert Martin Adams (1982). Since then, most critical attention seems to have focused either upon the work as a product of its age within the context of other works of its ilk—the inevitable literary descendant of Ernst Hoffmann's *Der Sandman* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*—or upon its amenability to analysis via either feminist or psychoanalytic literary theory.⁶ Hardly anyone, to my knowledge, has investigated in any extended and meaningful way the correlation of Milton's text to that of Villiers's.⁷ This is unfortunate and surprising, given that by the late nineteenth century, French translations of *Paradise Lost* abounded to the point that Villiers could hardly have escaped the poem so highly regarded.⁸ One critic, Marilyn Gaddis Rose, has

⁶ It should be noted that Shelley herself was deeply influenced by novel aspects of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, especially with regard to Eve. These influences work their way into her novel. See especially the chapter "Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve" in Gilbert and Gubar 213-47.

⁷ While the translator and scholar Marilyn Gaddis Rose, in her article "Milton, Chateaubriand, and Villiers," has examined a possible link between *Paradise Lost* and aspects of Villiers's drama, *Axël*, even she admits, "Villiers, essentially monolingual [...], could not have studied Milton directly with much comprehension" (39).

⁸ Regarded by Chateaubriand and by more than a dozen other contemporary French critics (Redman, *passim*). Of the translations, the editions included those of Nicholas François Dupré de Saint-Maur and Louis Racine in the mid-1700s, and culminated in that of Chateaubriand,

mentioned the translator's special fascination with Milton's Eve, but she leaves it at that. Yet since we know that Villiers familiarized himself with Chateaubriand's work early in his authorial career, it is not too much to suppose he may have grown to share the translator's particular interest not only with *Paradise Lost* generally but also with the figure of Eve especially (note the title of his work and the epigraphs).

My paper will address the connections between Milton's Eve and the Eves of Villiers. But a brief synopsis of this still relatively (and undeservedly) obscure novel and an examination of Villiers's use of the Miltonic epigraphs must precede my exploration. The plot of *L'Ève Future* unfolds as follows. Thomas Alva Edison, the Sorcerer of Menlo Park, receives a surprise visit from an English patron to whom he is deeply indebted, one Lord Celian Ewald. Ewald has crossed the Atlantic to say a final goodbye to Edison, as he intends to commit suicide. Ewald's justification for self-slaughter depends upon the untenable nature of his relationship with his mistress Alicia Clary, a modestly famous singer whose extraordinary physical beauty belies the insipidity of her spirit. Enslaved by her looks yet repulsed by her all-too-vulgar soul, Ewald can see no alternative but to end his own life. Edison, in order to save his friend and repay his debt, suggests that there is another option. The inventor has been working on a prototype android, female in form, which he asserts cannot only adequately replace the vapid Alicia but also realize the hopes and dreams Ewald harbors of an ideal companion—a true soul-mate. Through various means unknown to the generally clueless human singer who has nevertheless ensnared Ewald, Edison succeeds in making use of Alicia as a template, bringing into existence the electric simulacrum that he calls Hadaly, which in all ways (including the spiritual) ultimately supersedes the flesh-and-blood Alicia. Though he resists initially, Ewald eventually acknowledges the perfection of Edison's gift. His newfound bliss, however, does not last long, as an explosion destroys the steamer on which the lord and his artificial lady attempt to return to England. Hadaly does not survive the fire that breaks out in the cargo compartment where she slumbers in her coffin-like crate, going down with the ship.

the translator and critic who conferred upon the epic sufficient prestige to merit numerous reprintings.

Ewald survives, and in a telegram to Edison after the accident, he intimates that he will now make good on his original threat to commit suicide, claiming that “only the loss of Hadaly leaves me inconsolable—I grieve only for that shade” (219; Raitt 348).⁹

So brief a summary does little justice to Villiers’s philosophically sophisticated and technologically detailed narrative, so rife is it with symbolism and science that it would make even Nathaniel Hawthorne’s head swim.¹⁰ Villiers himself might very well address to us what Edison says to Ewald as he attempts to convince Ewald to enter into a pact to carry out his plan: “I offer you [...] a venture into the Artificial and its untasted delights! [...] Come, my lord, between the two of us, we form an eternal symbol: I represent Science and the omnipotence of its delusions; you are Humanity with its *paradise lost*” (71, italics mine; Raitt 136).¹¹ At this point in the narrative Edison escorts Ewald into a subterranean pseudo-paradise of his own artifice so that he may observe the artificial Hadaly in her “natural” habitat. Having already introduced the lord to the android in the world above, and in

⁹ Quotations from the novel derive from Adams’s English translation. Page numbers following Adams’s are from Raitt’s edition. As the occasion necessitates I will provide the original French from Alan Raitt’s edition in footnotes. Here Raitt’s text reads as follows: “C’est de Hadaly seule que je suis inconsolable—et je prends le deuil que de cette ombre.”

¹⁰ I omit, for simplicity’s sake, the significant role played by another female character, the mysterious somnambulist and psychic, Sowana (née Annie Anderson), who as Edison’s assistant not only sculpts the android’s form but also imbues it at times with her own spirit and helps program it with a lifetime of latent conversation.

¹¹ “Je vous offre, moi, de tenter l’artificiel et ses incitations nouvelles! [...] Tenez, mon cher lord, à nous deux, nous formons un éternel symbole: moi, je représente la Science avec la toute-puissance de ses mirages: vous, l’Humanité et son ciel perdu.” Here Adams, the modern translator, renders the French *ciel perdu* not literally as “lost heaven,” but as “paradise lost.” I strongly suspect he does so both in an attempt to retain the word order and spirit of the original and in order to make more explicit his own perceived implicit connection between Villiers’s narrative and Milton’s poem. This connection, noted earlier, Villiers himself makes plain in his use of two epigraphs from *Paradise Lost* (Books 4 and 3 respectively) that appear within the context of the third book of *L’Ève Future*, itself titled “L’Éden sous Terre” (“The Underground Eden”).

anticipation of acquainting his English friend with the science behind the construction of tomorrow's Eve through a macabre para-vivisection, he exacts a promise from the English aristocrat to consider seriously the prospect of upgrading from the soon-to-be obsolete Alicia, to the more responsive and engaging android—the “Eve of the future”; Edison now reveals to Ewald a paradoxically paradisaical “Avernus” at the center of which they find an alabaster fountain next to which Hadaly stands, “still heavily veiled” with a bird of paradise on her shoulder. This veil, incidentally, does not necessarily distinguish Villiers's presentation of Hadaly from Milton's initial description of the naked Eve who “as a *veil* down to the slender waist / Her unadorned golden tresses wore” (4.304-05, emphasis mine).¹²

As the third chapter of Book 3 of *L'Ève Future* opens, Villiers invokes through his epigraph a passage from *Paradise Lost*, however poorly he may recall the precise verse from Chateaubriand: “Ni le chant des oiseaux matineux, ni la nuit et son oiseau solennel” (“Neither the song of the morning birds nor the night and its solemn owl”).¹³ While evocative also of a passage from Milton's re-invocation of the Muse at the commencement of his own third book, this fragmentary quotation derives rather from Eve's “author and disposer” speech from Book 4 in which she begins with a statement of personal subjection—“God is thy law; thou mine”—and ends

¹² Hadaly does however sport a “coat of armor, shaped as for a woman out of silver plates [...] [c]losely molded to the figure, with a thousand perfect nuances [that] suggested elegant and virginal forms” (Adams 57; Raitt 114). This initially is the android's naked form, comparable to that of Fritz Lang's iconic Futura from his 1927 silent film, *Metropolis*.

¹³ Chateaubriand's translation reads, “mais ni le souffle du matin quand il monte avec le charme des *oiseaux matineux*, ni le soleil levant sur ce délicieux jardin, ni l'herbe, ni le fruit, ni la fleur qui brille de rosée, ni le parfum après une ondée, ni le soir paisible et gracieux, *ni la nuit* silencieuse avec *son oiseau solennel*, ni la promenade aux rayons de la lune ou à la tremblante lumière de l'étoile, n'ont de douceur sans toi” (*Oeuvres Complète*, 5.11 [1861]). Incidentally, Adams erroneously identifies the epigraph as coming from Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*, giving no specific line number by which to locate the passage.

But neither breath of morn when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds, nor rising sun
On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower
Glist'ring with dew, nor fragrance after showers,
Nor grateful evening mild, nor silent night
With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon
Or glitt'ring starlight without thee is sweet.
(PL 4.650-56)

Here, not only does Villiers by allusion anticipate the scene to follow in which Hadaly's own "intonations of supernatural voluptuousness" are accompanied by the "pure voice of a [phonographic] nightingale" (Adams 94), but he also evokes precisely the nature of the projected relationship between Ewald and his android companion.¹⁴ As Milton's Eve acknowledges the chain of command established by God in Eden, so too will Hadaly respond to her own Adam, the English gentleman, to whom Edison makes the android a gift. Her programming is tailored specifically to Ewald's temperament, and even her jewels and other accessories function as a control panel of sorts, allowing her lord to elicit the specific behaviors he desires at any given moment. Indeed, without Ewald, Hadaly has no *raison d'être*. But like Milton's Eve, she still retains the capacity to surprise her mate (and the reader) with acts of autonomous agency later in the narrative.

It is in this "lost Eden, rediscovered," as Edison puts it (95; Raitt 172), that Ewald and Hadaly converse for the first time; Edison, the god of a world of his own creation, leads this Adam to his future Eve, rather than, as in *Paradise Lost*, the voice of God leading the newly created woman to the father of mankind for whom she had been created (8.484-85). Villiers introduces this chapter entitled "Électricité" with another epigraph from the initial lines of Book 3 of Milton's epic—but this time, more accurately (though still not precisely) rendered in English as "Hail, holy light! Heaven daughter! first born!"¹⁵ The poet's transition from the

¹⁴ Villiers's original phrase characterizes Hadaly's voice as producing "inflexions d'une féminité surnaturelle" (164).

¹⁵ Chateaubriand: "Salut, Lumière sacrée, fille du Ciel, née la première, ou de l'Eternel rayon coéternel!" Curiously, Rose misidentifies this passage as coming from Book 2. Milton's own line reads, "Hail, holy

hellish darkness of Book 2 to the light of Heaven in Book 3, in the context of Villiers's narrative, here mirrors Ewald's "dark descent" into an Avernus of Edison's own design where there is discovered unto him the inventor's first-born electric offspring. "[S]o exquisite and graceful beyond all mere convention was the comportment of [Hadaly]," Villiers claims, that the "gentlemen were struck mute with admiration" (96; Raitt 173). Hadaly, often identified as the fulfillment of a dream, seems then not unlike Adam's dream and his subsequent vision of Eve in *Paradise Lost*:

in her summed up, in her contained,
And in her looks, which from that time infused
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspired
The spirit of love and amorous delight.
(PL 8.472-77)

Although Ewald's reaction is initially cooler than Adam's spontaneous outburst of unreserved praise, he is nonetheless profoundly intrigued, and eventually he will, like Adam, entirely succumb to the "spirit of love and amorous delight."

Astounded by Hadaly's apparent autonomy, Ewald inquires about the actual mechanism whereby she can so naturally converse. Edison, by way of an oblique response, declares, "Now [...] we are about to examine seriously the organ of this new electro-human creature, Tomorrow's Eve, if you will, who with the aid of Artificial Generation [...] seems destined within a century to fulfill the secret purpose of our species" (98; Raitt 175). Hadaly, Edison's "fille intellectuelle," the "daughter of [his] mind" (88; Raitt 162),¹⁶ who

Light, offspring of Heav'n, first-born, / Or of th'Eternal co-ternal beam" (2.1-2). I quote from Raitt's French edition of *L'Ève* in which he notes that Villiers may have actually cribbed the line from a French translation of Poe's "Literary Life of Thingum Bob" rather than directly from Milton's epic (419, note 1); coincidentally, the quotation also appears in "Les Filles."

¹⁶ Of course, this expression necessarily evokes Satan's relation to Sin in *Paradise Lost* who, like Athena from Zeus, springs full-grown from her father's head (2.747-61). For Villiers, however, Edison's intellectual progeny remediates turpitude as she embodies the feminine ideal.

“took shape within [his] brain” (98: Raitt 175), will eventually supplant Ewald’s Alicia so completely that the English lord and his electro-human lover at once echo and elide the Adam and Eve of *Paradise Lost*.

Hadaly, whose name as Edison explains it, derives from the Iranian word signifying the “Ideal,” would then seem to be a throwback to the pre-lapsarian Eve as well as the eponymous Eve of the future. This then relegates Hadaly’s biological doppelganger to her own position as a daughter of the post-lapsarian Eve, whose own name, Alicia Clary, ironically signifies the “brightness of nobility.”¹⁷ Whereas Alicia has been born but to be discarded as an obsolete model of femininity, Hadaly re-channels the best of that providentially designed First Woman so characterized by Diane McColley in her monograph, *Milton’s Eve*—the ideal (however derivative) help-meet to Adam. As Edison observes of Hadaly, “She was Humanity at its best—minus that which is unnamable in us, minus that intangible element whose absence at moments like that can hardly be censured” (215; Raitt 342). Early in the novel, the Sorcerer of Menlo Park “promise[s] to raise from the clay of Human Science as it now exists, a Being made in our image, and who, accordingly, will be to us what we are to God” (64; Raitt 125).¹⁸ Edison, as something of a god himself, shares this God-like nature with Ewald: the android as derivative both of Edison’s scientific sorcery and Ewald’s romantic fantasy is created in the image of the latter who has put himself entirely in the hand of the creator-authority. As Milton expressed it, “He for God only, she for God in him” (*PL* 4.299). Hadaly will share with Milton’s Eve

¹⁷ The name *Alicia*, or *Alice*, is a shortened form of *Adelaide*, the French form of the Germanic name meaning “noble kind”; *Clary* would seem to be a variant of *Clara* from the Latin *clarus*, meaning “bright” or “famous.”

¹⁸ Incidentally, the epithet, “the Sorcerer of Menlo Park,” later appropriated by Villiers (though coined by an American, William Croffut, in 1878) had been applied with irony by the early French electrician, Théodore du Moncel (1821-1884), a contemporary of Villiers, who was originally skeptical and derisive of Edison’s work before recanting his doubts prior to his death. For this note, I am indebted to David Ranzan, Salisbury University’s Blackwell Library archivist, who worked previously as a research associate for The Thomas A. Edison Papers at Rutgers University.

her “softness” and “sweet attractive grace” (4.298), and both will look to their mates as “guide / And head” (4.442-43) and “author and disposer” (4.635); Ewald submits himself to Edison’s will as Adam adheres to God’s law (4.637) while each artificial woman fulfills the “heart’s desire” of her man (8.451) without meriting “subjection” (8.570).¹⁹

Yet Hadaly surpasses that similarly ideal yet naïve Eve of *Paradise Lost* in that, while Milton’s character wonders for whom the stars shine at night (4.657-58), Edison’s android is capable of explaining for her new Adam “that the man who looks up and admires the stars is often looking at suns that no longer exist” (156; Raitt 255). The vain and seductive Alicia embodies all that is negative in the Miltonic Eve,²⁰ while Hadaly’s artificial form constitutes the ultimate upgrade—an “Eve 2.0,” so to speak. In addition, Alicia finds an analogue in the character of Evelyn Habal, a woman described by Edison, whose mistreatment of another of his friends first inspired the inventor to construct Hadaly.²¹ In response to Ewald’s inquiry regarding the android’s origin, Edison tells the story of one Edward Anderson who abandons his wife and two children for the “very pretty little golden blonde” ballerina whose first name is evocative of the name of Adam’s mate, but whose surname, *Habal*, derives from the Hebrew verb meaning “to be vain in act, word, or expectation,” or simply, “to lead astray” (הַבִּל).²² Of Evelyn, Edison says,

¹⁹ If, etymologically, one understands the adjective *artificial* as referring to the making (Latin *facere*) with skill (*ars*) of something from available raw materials in the environment (and therefore a term akin to “technological”), then of course Adam is also artificial. He, however, is the originary human while, according to the legend adapted by Milton, Eve stands at one remove, derived of Adam, and therefore in a sense, less natural (or more artificial) than the entity for whom and from whom God fashioned her with divine τέχνη.

²⁰ If indeed she is not actually in some ways an analogue to the figure of Lilith.

²¹ Note how the simple reversal of the *d* in Hadaly as *b* renders almost exactly Evelyn’s last name; they constitute negative inversions of each other, demonstrated orthographically.

²² See Ecclesiastes 1:2 (*babal babalim, vék’hól babal*): “vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” As rendered in English however the word *babal* loses its etymological connection to the sense of “breath” as that which is

I declare her guilty, above all, of a capital crime, that
pestilent creature whose function it was to unleash
knowingly, deliberately, the hundred-headed hydra within
[Edward]! She was in no way comparable, I think to Eve,
simple-minded Eve, whose love—it was fatal, no doubt,
but still love—dragged her toward the Temptation that she
thought would raise her companion in Paradise to the
station of a god.

(112; Raitt 190-91)

Thus led astray into the vain affair with the ballerina, Edward
eventually, “in an [paroxysm] of frenzy and despair, put an end to
his own life” (108; Raitt 184). As a result, Edison replicates
tomorrow’s Eve, the *femme-bot*, in order to replace *femme fatales* like
Evelyn and Alicia.²³

Ewald, though he does not visit Menlo Park with the intention
of doing so, effectively makes a request of Edison not unlike that
which Milton’s Adam makes of God:

Among unequals what society
Can sort, or what harmony or true delight,
Which must be mutual in proportion due
Given and received? [. . .]

.....

[. . .] Of fellowship I speak

ephemeral, intangible, or otherwise fleeting. The pronominal Evelyn then
produces something of an oxymoron since Eve’s name (חַוָּה) signifies
the “breath” which evinces life. I must credit my colleague, Dr. Nick
Melczarek, whose invaluable contributions helped me discern the
interrelationship of these Hebrew terms. Here and subsequently I have
made use of the *Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (coded with
the numbering system from Strong’s *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*).

²³ This, however, is not to say that Hadaly is without a deadly defense
system; she is in her own way a *femme fatale*, but only to those interloping
men who seek to compromise her fidelity to Ewald and not by virtue of
the seductive power wielded either by Alicia Clary or Evelyn Habal. It is
nevertheless interesting to note that Milton’s Eve vainly recommends
suicide to Adam as a means to circumvent divine punishment, a course of
action he eschews (*PL* 10.1000-02).

Such as I seek, fit to participate
All rational delight wherein the brute
Cannot be human consort.
(PL 8.383-86, 389-92)

For Ewald, as he himself explains at some length in Book 1 of *L'Ève Future*, Alicia was just such a sort of unequal unfit for rational delights, a brute insensible and unsuitable for human consort. Although she was in appearance herself the mirror image of the iconic sculpture of the Venus de Milo (*Venus Victrix*), Ewald claims, "Her intimate being was in flat contradiction with the form it inhabited" (31; Raitt 78). "This stunning beauty," he continues, "is the habitation of such appalling moral misery!" (35; Raitt 84-85); and as such a "bourgeois Goddess" (36; Raitt 86), she fails to fulfill the role of meet companion to the English aristocrat even though she may make an esthetically pleasing lover.

On the other hand, although Villiers as narrator describes Eve's electric avatar as "Half-goddess, half-woman, a sensual illusion, [whose] beauty irradiated the night" (204; Raitt 324), Hadaly is also every bit the Eve created by God providentially for Adam in *Paradise Lost*: "imaginative and rational, sensuous and intelligent, passionate and chaste, and free and responsible" (McColley 3). While Alicia, escorted by Ewald to the Louvre, looks upon her marble likeness, and observes narcissistically, "Look, it's me! [...] but I have arms, and besides I'm more distinguished looking" (46; Raitt 100). In this instance Alicia reminds one more of Milton's Eve and the narcissistic response she displays before her own reflection in the "smooth lake" (PL 4.460-65). Hadaly excels her model intellectually and spiritually. Unlike Alicia, Hadaly is the ideal whose name, spelled backwards, roughly renders the Hebrew noun, *yaldab* (ילדה), signifying "a girl or maiden," especially one of marriageable age. The android thus becomes the perfected mirror image of the real that it then surpasses. Though physically identical to the woman of flesh and blood, the android is essentially her antithesis as she constitutes the ultimate technological antidote to all *habals*.

In producing his android for Ewald, Edison does precisely that which Milton's God promises Adam: "What next I bring shall please thee, be assured, / Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self, /

Thy wish exactly to thy heart's desire" (*PL* 8.449-51). Even though the reader of Milton's epic knows of the disobedience and happy disaster to follow, Adam's subsequent recollection of bliss nevertheless would seem also to describe Ewald's ultimate acceptance of his own Eve, a "commotion strange" akin to that which transports Adam (*PL* 8.531). Villiers describes the moment in which Hadaly finally and successfully dupes her new lover into believing she is indeed a creature of flesh: "It was simply this: that the woman represented by this mysterious doll at his side had never found within herself the power to make him experience the sweet and overpowering instant of passion that had just shaken his soul" (194; Raitt 308).

There remains much more to investigate about the interplay between Villiers's novel *L'Ève Future* and Milton's epic beyond the observations I have made here concerning the novelist's appropriation of epigraphs and his treatment of the figures of Alicia, Evelyn, and Hadaly. For example, based upon the implications of the preceding argument, one might consider the phenomenon of authorial ventriloquism—that as much as each of these creatures Eve and Hadaly are fabricated by God and Edison respectively within the diegetic logic of their own narratives, they are ultimately the intellectual daughters or literary projections of Milton and Villiers, types through which both authors give expression to their own theosophical ideologies.²⁴

Within such a framework, each author also explores the nature and the role of women. Drawing from her own work on Eve's creation, Anne Ferry contends that Milton worked within

²⁴ Another critical avenue of inquiry might concern the dichotomy of fertility/sterility with regard to Milton's Eve and Villiers's *andride*. The former more explicitly sexualized entity holds not only all humanity and its burden of original sin *in potentia*, but more importantly the prospect of humanity's salvation through the birth of a single special descendant, the Messiah; the latter, however, shuts down the negative potentiality of sexual reproduction in favor of industrial-technological production, with the prospect of becoming herself an entire race of saviors who will render the need for any one man's self-sacrifice moot. "There's no doubt," claims Edison, "that within a few years substrata like this one [Hadaly's mechanism] will be fabricated by the thousands; the first manufacturer who picks up the idea will be able to establish a factory for the production of Ideals!" (147).

proscribed doctrines to fashion Adam's mate in line with his own perspectives on companionate marriage and divorce (Ferry, *passim*). Certainly Villiers's Edison and Ewald are of like mind when it comes to the "fit union of [...] souls" and the "correspondence [...] of the mind" as expressed in Milton's treatise, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, or as Adam treats the matter of Eve's "love / And sweet compliance, which declare unfeigned / Union of mind or in us both one soul" (8.602-04) . In fact, in her study of Eve as Adam's ideal mate, Ferry identifies many of the key passages also examined above, observing at one point that Milton "chooses freely to make Eve the instrument of grace in man's restoration" (129), the role Hadaly has also been designed (both by Edison and Villiers) to fulfill. Indeed, in at least one other moment from *Paradise Lost* (also cited by Ferry), Eve's words find their corollary in those spoken by Hadaly to her own English Adam: "bereave me not," Eve pleads,

Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
Thy counsel in this uttermost distress,
My onely strength and stay; forlorn of thee,
Whither shall I betake me, where subsist?
(10.918-22)²⁵

Hadaly petitions Ewald in a similar vein:

My being in this low world depends, for you at least, only on your free will. Attribute a being to me, affirm that I am! Reinforce me with your self. [...] If you question my being, I am lost, and that means that you lose in me the ideal creature whom you might as easily have called into existence.
(199; Raitt 316)

Such moments as these illustrate the influence of the work of the epic poet upon the novelist's figuration of his female characters.

²⁵ Chateaubriand renders these lines as follows: "Ne me prive pas de ce dont je vis, de tes doux regards, de ton secours, de ton conseil, qui dans cette extrême détresse sont ma seule force et mon seul appui. Délaissée de toi, où me retirer? où subsister!"

These characters, and others, would seem to merit an ongoing and more thorough investigation that will no doubt yield a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which Villiers pays homage to Milton whose own literary instantiation of Eve has provided such a rich repository for so many critics to explore and other authors to emulate. Considering the ubiquity of *Paradise Lost* in late nineteenth-century France, the debt that Villiers owes to “yesterday’s Eve” as conceived by Milton seems quite plausible as evidenced by more than the strategic quotations he uses from Chateaubriand in his futuristic novel, *Tomorrow’s Eve*.

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