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THE « JEU D'ADAM » AS « ORDO REPRESENTACIONIS EVAE »: TRUTH AND DRAMATIC CONSEQUENCES

While readers of medieval literature nowadays may be reluctant to speak of « masterpieces », we are likely to agree that certain works do have unique and enduring greatness. Problems arise, however, when we endeavor to verify and to deepen our appreciations. The fundamental search for significant qualities can yield very different results. Attention may focus on what appeals to basic human concerns, as when the relation of experience fosters insight into the psyche or the universe. Seriousness of purpose may be identified with topical allusion to key personalities, cultural systems, and historic events. Frequently studies grapple with aesthetic appeal by elucidating formal aspects of unity and economy, and notably persistent is the search for an originality of voice or vision. Whatever the perspective, analyses have come to associate individual qualities with patterns of contextual arrangement. A prevailing *esprit de système* looks for harmonized functions that define a unity of purpose. Previous willingness to isolate elements of value while dismissing what remains as dated, naïve, or flawed in transmission, has bowed to the ambitious formulation of comprehensive explanations. The search for perfect answers gives a partisan grimness to the interplay of diverse appreciations. Moreover, it fails to account for the joys of re-reading and the fresh sensation of possible discovery which we may expect of a great work.

Our perception of legitimate poetic qualities seems hampered by the difficulty we encounter when, in the absence of adequate secondary documentation, we attempt to judge the purposes of a medieval work by its extrinsic ramifications. Philology's venerable interest in determining sources has represented, in part, a modest yet fruitful effort to identify degrees of purpose on the level at which indebtedness explains qualities. A strength of this approach is its implicit recognition that amplification, a time-honored rhetorical mode, has an impact on medieval literary culture. The

Jeu d'Adam (Ordo representacionis Ade), it has not been sufficiently shown, virtually stands alone in its incorporation of the very material for which, we may say, it provides a gloss. Composed anonymously toward 1150 and surviving in but one MS, the Anglo-Norman *Jeu* displays its amplifications in such a way as to proclaim its thought and purpose [1]. Too quickly have we contented ourselves with the obvious, however, when in fact the play only just begins to account for its full range of accomplishments. Even a preliminary assessment of them may foster needed insights into the medieval dynamics of poetic volition.

Celebrated the third Sunday before Lent, the office of Matins for Septuagesima has, from the days of the early Church, presented the Creation and the Fall as a prelude to the commemoration of Christ's redemptive suffering. The *Jeu d'Adam* appears to delineate a liturgical performance relying largely upon that office: besides an opening lection in Latin comprising Genesis 1, a series of Latin responsories drawn from chapters two and three relates the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel [2]. The exegetical impulse of those responsories, limited largely to the selection and rearrangement of verses, is magnified in the vernacular component. Dialogue translates and elaborates the content of those choral passages, making them appear ceremonial interludes, even glosses, in the dramatic unfolding. The resulting greater reliance on direct discourse is matched by careful attention to visual elements, as is

[1] MS 927 in the Bibliothèque municipale at Tours dates from the second quarter of the thirteenth century and comprises religious and moralistic works. I shall refer to Noomen's edition, *Le Jeu d'Adam*, Paris, Champion, 1971. Verse numbers are to his scheme for the OF text alone. Noomen offers a useful rendering of the Latin material abbreviated in MS. For photographs of the original and comparisons of readings, see Sletsjöe's diplomatic edition, *Le Mystère d'Adam*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1968. He assesses previous editions in *Histoire d'un texte. Des vicissitudes qu'a connues le* Mystère d'Adam *(1854-1963)*, « Studia Neophilologica », 37, 1965, 11-39.

[2] Noomen's edition, *op. cit.*, takes its lection from the Vulgate and its responsories from the *Liber responsalis* attributed to Gregory the Great. We can only surmise the actual length and content of the Latin passages; Noomen refers to his citations as, not sources, but « rapprochements » (p. 14).

shown in the Latin stage directions. Moreover, Satan and a pack of devils are much in evidence, occasioning speeches, actions, and episodes entirely foreign to Genesis. What do we make of such amplification? When it takes the form of an ample section detailing the misfortunes of Adam and Eve from the time they leave Paradise until they are bodily dragged into Hell, we may judge that the anonymous playwright seeks, in the main, to give a fuller dramatic substance to the well-known account. Such adjustments, suggesting a *prédication par personnages*, would doubtless carry on a liturgical concern for clear and memorable representation [3]. Less evident is the fact that, in important ways, the juxtaposed worlds of venerable text and modern rendition appear at odds, as do elements within the vernacular narrative itself. Nonetheless, readers of the play often make assumpions about what the play tries to do and, depending on the view, find that volition an asset or a liability. We do well to examine the *Jeu*'s ambiguous aspects precisely in order to glimpse, at least, the significant range of its purposes.

We know that Genesis comprises two different traditions in recounting the Creation (1.1 - 2.4a and 2.4b - 3.24). The lection beginning the *Jeu* reproduces the first account, whereas in the vernacular rendition which follows it there occurs a fusion of both: Adam and Eve confront their Lord and subscribe to something of a feudal statement of fidelity before they are allowed into the garden. The matter of human dominion over all creation finds itself boldly linked with the first couple's immediate duties in Paradise. This fusion seems to take advantage of the exegetical opportunity afforded by the semantic range of *homo* in I, 27: « Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam: ad imaginem Dei creavit

[3] In his *Le Jeu d'Adam. Etude descriptive et analytique*, « Romania » 89, 1968, 145-193, Noomen speaks of the third section in particular, the *Ordo prophetarum*, and the play in general as a *prédication par personnages* (pp. 179 f). That is, the playwright, drawing upon Scripture, exegetical traditions, and vulgarizations gives dramatic form to a homiletic presentation of sin necessitating redemption. The traditional qualified appreciation of dramatic value, as such, is expressed clearly by Muir in *Liturgy and Drama in the Anglo-Norman Adam*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1973, p. 117.

illum, masculum et feminam creavit eos ». I would emphasize the discretion with which the vernacular text, by downplaying initially the presence of Eve, dramatizes the veracity of that semantic range. From her the Figura exacts very early in the play a rather flat statement of fidelity (vv. 41 ff). Thence, until his departure sets the stage for the temptation, he specifically addresses Adam. Eve is mentioned directly just once, vv. 59 ff., but she is not addressed. Whatever be her reality on the stage, she is something of a non-person within the hierarchy of responsibility that the play's first section is at pains to establish.

The interplay of lesson and dramatization ends up providing for specific reference to the second account's differing rendition of the Creation. Just after the Figura ushers Adam and Eva into Paradise, the chorus intones the only appropriate response ll. 213 f.: « Tulit ergo Dominus hominem, (et posuit eum in paradiso voluptatis, ut operaretur et custodiret illum...) ». In this context *homo* can be legitimately glossed to mean the couple, while the clear and usual reference to Adam is not at all obscured.

At once tentative and somewhat ostentatious, such dramatic artfulness in the composition of diversified elements typifies also the characterization of Eve. Her wary frankness with Satan, her enthusiastic promotion of the fruit before her husband, her forthrightness in confession, and her expressions of repentance, all texture the pale cameo of her in Genesis with the richness of personality, contrasting thus with the persistent dogmatic stiffness of the Figura and Adam. How does such a deft portrayal accord with the even ponderous delineation of spiritual and temporal responsibilities that can, as seen above, make an attractive woman merely seen, not heard?

From these and other ambiguous relationships at the heart of the *Jeu*'s version of Genesis one may infer the anonymous playwright's efforts to update well-known material. Always in line with the Septuagesima's anticipation of Lent, he appears mindful of prevailing ecclesiastical views and the sensibilities of his contemporary audience. Differences of opinion on the composition of that audience suggest, however, that matters of purpose and performance are more complex than generally allowed and will not readily explain, say, what is served by the curious rapport one observes

between characterization and dogma [4]. One avenue of investigation into dramatic functions adduces the following: just as the very use of vernacular in such a work would pointedly mark a significant trend in religious celebration, so this diversified amplification of *matière* discovers dramatic possibilities in the very rapport between language and meaning, ironic possibilities not apparent in the transparent lyricism of the liturgy but latent, we see, in the Genesis accounts of Creation. Let us examine closely the characterization of Eve.

After an artful, persistent, but unsuccessful temptation of Adam, Satan himself proceeds to win over Eve. She recognizes him, hears him out and agrees to eat of the forbidden fruit. Eve speaks only for the second time here (vv. 205 ff.), and it is Satan who dominates the conversation. He assures her of his good intentions, he flatters her sensitivity, he requests her confidence, and he discourses on the fruits of paradise. Her response invites detailed analysis.

After guiding a lengthy preliminary exchange in order to build up good faith and expectations, Satan turns to the heart of the matter:

> Jo vus acoint d'un grant engin
> Que vus est fait en cest gardin:
> Le fruit que Deus vus ad doné
> Nen a en soi gaires bonté;
> Cil qu'il vus ad tant defendu,
> Il ad en soi grant vertu.
> En celui est grace de vie,
> De poëste e de seignorie,
> De tut saver, bien e mal (243 ff.).

His claims could not be more extravagant; he holds out to her the possibility of power and knowledge, expressed in the most abstract

[4] However phrased, critical appreciation of meaning in the *Jeu* tends to presume a fidelity to prevailing religious doctrine. Culminating a trend, sweeping topological assessments are to be found in Muir, *ibid.*, and in Hunt's *The Unity of the Play of Adam* (Ordo representacionis Ade), « Romania » 96, 1975, 368-388; 497-527.

of terms. Eve's brief reply is most revealing: « Quel savor a? » (v. 252). Her concern focuses directly on the concrete reality of the fruit, a reality much removed from the context prompting Satan's eloquence. His hyperbolic rejoinder, « Celestial » (v. 252), at once perfunctory, learned, and rather ironic in this context, immediately is followed by a more personalized appeal to Eve. Because of her special attributes (*ton bels cors, ta figure*) she deserves to reign as queen (*dame*) in the world and to be all-knowing (*bone maistre*). Though Satan's shift in language makes omnipotence more tangible, Eve's attention appears to remain fixed on the fruit: « Est tel li fruiz? » (v. 259), and going towards it she avows: « Ja me fait bien sol le veer » (v. 260). Such exchanges suggest that, in fact, she pays little heed to the clearly seditious substance of what Satan is saying, nor is she strongly moved by his rhetoric.

The level of Eve's characteristic awareness appears fixed on the awed perception of the fruit itself, whose magnificence is directly experienced, not perceived in its abstract potentiality. Indeed, when Satan, sensing victory, deploys an overtly commanding rhetorical style, her basic composure throughout their exchange is reinforced:

Satan: . . . . . .
O Deus serrez, sanz faillance,
De egal bonté, de egal puissance.
Guste del fruit!
Eva: Jo'n ai regard (269 ff.) [5].

Such reluctance matches well the definition of Eve's rapport with God and Adam as stated and dramatized in the play's first scene. She gives in at last when pointedly urged not to believe Adam

[5] Possible corruption in the line (it does not rhyme) must temper any judgement of its meaning. The semantic field for *regart* appears divided between « consideration », in the spirit of inquiry, and « apprehension », either possibility evincing a definite orientation of activity, not hesitation (cf. Noomen, *Jeu*, p. 86, note to vv. 555-65). Eve continues to ponder attentively what is happening. Her acquiescence (« joi ferai », v. 272), then, is not submission, witness her measured response to Satan's chafing insistance: « Suffrez moi / Tant que Adam soit en recoi » (564 f.).

(v. 272). Satan succeeds only by rejoining the immediate world of the woman and her marriage. The appearance then of Adam is dramatically crucial. That Eve does take of the fruit, is worked out in her discussion with her husband. Curiously, therefore, Eve does cooperate, but not strictly, we suspect, as Satan really had in mind. In fact, has not Satan been somewhat inept? His grandiloquence does not touch a simple heart and events might very well have worked against him. The very efficacity of the serpent's *inaudible* advice — in that, faithful to Genesis — gains additional value. Thanks to a new context, it acts as a foil to point out Satan's incomplete rhetorical temptation of Eve. Other features in the text point to such a reading of this passage.

Modifying its source so that Satan plays a role, the *Jeu* elaborates with care two temptation scenes prior to the serpent's success. There takes place a repetition of content which, as elsewhere in the play, has several ramifications. For our immediate purposes, two bear stressing.

First, when Satan repeats to Eve the substance of his remarks to Adam, the rhetorical aspect of his persuasion becomes the center of attention and energizes thereby the affective nuances of their conversation. Eve comes alive, and Satan's cunning, not especially obvious as he speaks to Adam, is strongly confirmed. Confrontation gives way to interaction, though we find, paradoxically, that communication becomes flawed.

Second, differing recognitions of Satan's identity distinguish clearly the caracters of Adam and Eve in anticipation of how the woman will take the pitch of her tempter. Concluding a debate during which he flirts unwittingly with the promotion of self-interest at the expense of his duties and responsibilities, Adam's outraged discovery of to whom he has been speaking (vv. 196 ff.) contrasts nicely with Eve's immediate and off-hand greeting of Satan. How does she know him? And why does she then accede so readily to his request for secrecy as a condition to the unfolding of his good news? The play does not answer such questions. We are led to assume that such is the world of Eve, where the perception of individuals and objects matters most, not the weighing of interests and responsibilities. By comparison with this private person, Adam is a company man.

The actual dramatization of the split between Adam and Eve, occurring in the seduction scene itself, reproduces faithfully the portrait of Eve which we first detected in her conversation with Satan. In their initial exchange Eve speaks directly of the wordly power (*honor*) she has just heard about, then stresses the fact that, though a *traitre*, Satan is not to be feared because she has examined him, put him to the test (« Car l'asaiai », v. 282), and will retain a healthy skepticism: « ... car nel crerai / De nule rien tant que l'asai » (vv. 285 f.) [6]. Adam is not convinced and, ever mindful of his position, enjoins his wife from fraternizing of the sort. At this point the serpent aptly intervenes to whisper Eve directions. Her course changes in that she now relies on direct affirmation and deeds rather than on discussion. She cuts through Adam's general concerns, much as she has ignored Satan's dogma, and triumphs. He is impotent in the face of her decisiveness.

Her performance is convincingly decisive because she is working within the world to which she is accustomed. Possible reference to either a general good or to a specific good thing is quickly concretized in favor of the latter as she speaks of the fruit's quality:

E: Pernum ço bien que nus est prest!
A: Est il tant bon?
E: Tu le saveras.
Nel poez saver si'n gusteras (294 ff.).

Her reaction to the first bite affirms the basis of her perceptions of the world:

Gusté en ai. Deus, quele savor!
Unc ne tastai d'itel dolçor!
D'itel savor est ceste pome! (303 ff.).

Most impressively, her subsequent description of her new state fulfills Satan's promise to her. Her insensitivity to such language

[6] Editors have not done justice to *honor*. It has to do with a feudal sense of dominion, of political control within a fiefdom. Rather than avoiding issues or mouthing generalities (riches, profit, honor), Eve persists in taking Satan's proposals at face value and with reference to the Figura's initial, feudalistic injunctions. Muir, *op cit.*, pp. 113 f., discusses feudal elements in the play.

prior to this moment lends much weight now to the fact that she is truly experiencing what she is talking about, not just declaiming so as to win over her mate.

> Or sunt mes oil tant cler veant
> Jo semble Deu, le tuit puissant.
> Quanque fu, quanque doit estre
> Sai jo trestut: bien en sui maistre (307 ff.).

Such great surprise and genuine enthusiasm bears out the ingenous curiosity she has shown in her conversation with Satan and her quietly stubborn faith in facts when confronted by her husband [7].

At the very moment, then, when the Fall occurs, we discover that what originally appeared to be a non-person has become a commanding force. Eve has not changed; rather, our understanding of her has grown, thanks to the text's persistent focus on the nuances of what she says. Through them we find her cautiously candid with others and with herself. Such characterization, a perhaps unexpected consequence of the clearly subservient position assigned her in the play's first scene, seems at odds with the presumed dogmatic liturgical dimension of the play and with the traditional view of Eve. That is, she is especially attractive at the very moment she commits her sin. This paradox serves two major and related purposes: it creates a dramatic moment of great power, and it sets the stage for the supreme liturgical affirmation of the piece in Eve's final statement.

Constant in the *Jeu d'Adam* is the iteration of a system of responsibility linking the Creator and the first couple. The Figura

[7] What about topical misogyny? As occasion warrants, is not Eve passive, coquettish, susceptible to flattery, even wicked? Auerbach's attack in *Mimesis*, New York, Doubleday, 1957, pp. 128 ff., on Etienne's *Note sur les vers 279-287 du* Jeu d'Adam, « Romania » 48, 1922, 592-595, epitomizes a determined quest for reflections of period ethos in literature, the occasional excesses of which, despite Etienne's faring well with recent editors, survive in the latters' inadequate glossing of key terms like *regart, honor* and *tazera.* However tempting, Satan's somewhat learned approach to Eve must not be taken too seriously. She does not do so. Could not a hard-headed woman be as « topical »? More to the point: Eve cannot be neatly summarized, and perhaps our scribe's « error » in that passage is a response of sorts to her demanding presence.

defines that system, Adam and Eve agree to it, Satan attacks it, and the first man and woman bemoan their violation of it. Such repetition leaves little doubt ever as to the hierarchy in force. After the Fall, as that iteration is prolonged through additions to the Biblical account, its message takes on a decidedly new aspect thanks to the constant reminder that Eve is the one to blame. Before God is heard walking again in the garden, Adam delivers an extended lament (vv. 315 ff.) which includes a very strong malediction addressed to Eve (vv. 356 ff.). Following the vivid tableau of eviction and fruitless toil, Adam balances a substantial statement of regret with a comprehensive and pitiless attack on Eve's conduct. The drama of the first couple then concludes as Eve, who has already responded to God's punishment with an ample confession of her sin, fully acknowledges and repents for her crime against her husband and her Maker (vv. 559 ff.).

Discrete adjustments keep prominent the fact and signifiance of Eve's guilt. The order in Genesis of God's justice (serpent-Eve-Adam) has been reversed and the content of the condemnations modified. The Figura's first malediction follows Scripture in describing the problems Adam will face in working the land. As regards Eve, conversely, divine punishment takes on a new severity as the Lord describes, not just what will be her sufferings in childbirth, but also what the dire effects will be on her *lignage*. She immediately confesses and accepts his will. The Figura then addresses the serpent, warning it of upcoming struggle with woman. Through its position in this context, the speech connects with the preceding stress on *lignage* and magnifies the significance of Eve's influence on the future (Adam will raise the point yet again in his concluding condemnation of her, vv. 555 ff). Also noteworthy is the Figura's masterful interrogation of Adam at the start of this scene. The manner of Scripture is largely retained when Adam finally confesses (vv. 417 ff., cf. Genesis 3.12), but the Figura's knowledgeability and finesse call attention to the self-serving quality in Adam's concise accusation of Eve. While the Figura is obviously not to be fooled (« Ta moiller creïstes plus que moi » v. 423), the very interplay of this conversation keeps the topic of Eve's *mesfait* squarely in the play's spotlight.

That illumination is sustained best of all by the persistent

atmosphere of opprobrium and dejection declaring itself immediately the fruit is taken. And perhaps nothing contributes more to that gloom, curiously enough, than the more or less veiled foreshadowings of Christ's appearance. In Adam's speeches, for example, brief mentions of hope for redemption surface without really troubling the copious flow of his despair. When he first chastizes Eve (vv. 356 ff.), he recognizes that his only hope lies in divine intervention (vv. 367 ff.). Yet, he immediately rejects any such possibility, declares all is lost, and dares not make petition to God (v. 379). His remarkable reference to Mary's son (v. 382) brings about no enduring change of mood as he concludes his lament: « Or en soit tot a Deu plaisir, / N'i ad conseil que del morir » (vv. 385 f.). In fact, his final words to Eve convey a certain bitter satisfaction:

> Tuz ceals que istront de nostre lignee
> Del toen forfait sentiront la hascee.
> Tu forfis, a toz ceals est jugee.
> Mult tazera por qui il iert changee (555 ff.).

That is, the Redeemer will come forth only after some time [8]. Adam doubtless makes use here of that *eventual* appearance as a way of underscoring what terrible suffering there will be for others in the meantime. Nor is the Figura's conduct very reassuring. What comfort he may appear to give, takes the guise of a dark threat. His speech expelling the couple from Paradise (an amplification) dwells on how much they will suffer in this life and in Hell. Its wrathful portent can only augment their horror:

> N'est hom que vus en face aïe
> Par cui soiez vus ja rescos,
> Se moi nen prenge pité de vus (510 ff.).

This Lord is not moved to clothe his exiles. Adam's abiding negative posture may be, after all, a legitimate response to a celestial self-

[8] *ta(r)zer* < *TARDICARE, from L. *tardus*. Noomen's *tarzer = se faire attendre* imputes to the Savior a willful tardiness. Adam does not belabor the point, so let us find here the idea of hesitation or just waiting, even of non-action (Mod. F. *tarder*). The Figura's conduct speaks for itself.

righteousness that obscures the very appeal of redemption itself. Eve's evaluation proves different. We must now examine her concluding statement.

Eve begins (vv. 559 ff.) with a full acknowledgement of Adam's views, her crime, and God's justice. This methodical assessment, comprising the first two strophes, is followed by a more personal statement: recognizing that she has no right to make amends, Eve requests Adam's forgiveness and appeals to Death. The fifth strophe summarizes the events of the Fall. Eve, we then learn, cannot account for her past behavior. The future is clear, however, and she follows the examples of Adam and the Figura in recognizing the terrible heritage of her act: « ... ma grant mesaventure / Compera chier la nostre engendreore » (583 f.). In the final (eighth) strophe of this speech there occurs, however, a remarkable reversal in the gloom which has prevailed since the Fall. Expressing hope in a reconciliation with God (« char tot iert acordance », v. 588), Eve looks forward confidently to redemption: « Deus me rendra sa grace e sa mustrance, / Gieter nus voldra d'emfer par pussance » (589 f.).

This speech concludes the story of the first couple in the *Jeu d'Adam*. It is the last and easily the most comprehensive of the three statements unfolding Eve's interpretation of their misfortunes. As before the Fall, her identity becomes clearest only once Adam and the Figura have spoken at great length. In each circumstance she assumes a commanding position by instituting important change. In the last speech we do not find the persuasiveness Eve demonstrated by the Tree of Knowledge. Dramatic effect has clearly shifted, even progressed, from the interplay of personality to the apperception of spiritual truth. In each realm, Eve's contribution is characteristic and decisive.

Much of what Eve says in her concluding statement repeats the observations of Adam and the Figura. Its diction is influenced further by the deployment of decasyllables formally arranged in quatrains, usually monorhymed, following the tableau of eviction and frustration (vv. 519 ff.). In a similar section near the beginning (vv. 49 ff.), Adam and the Figura go over the delights and regulations of Paradise. With a regular cesura and emphatic repetition in the rhyme, such verse appears to nurture a stately expres-

sion, one using rhetorical modes of balance and repetition. It contrasts with the perhaps faster and more « prosaic » pace of the octosyllabic couplet. The renewed use of the quatrain reveals best of all the force of recurrence at the heart of this work. Through a definite poetic register the world of Paradise and the world of redemption are united in the celebration of liturgical meaning [9]. Conversational discourse has linked them narrationally. Eve clarifies the vital connection.

While largely repeating what we have heard from the others, Eve's final statement directly concerns her specific adventure. She corroborates, for example, the honest intentions which appear implicit in her conduct with the fruit: « Je t'en donai, si quidai por bien faire » (v. 577). Indeed, her summarizing and straightforwardness are consistent with her honest behavior in all previous scenes. In this context, above all, such conduct and assessment amount to a statement of utter self-abnegation. Aware of Adam's exceeding rage (« mult m'avé blastengé », v. 559) and of the serpent's deceptions (v. 575), she yet remains within the sphere of her personal experience and utterly confesses her sin. It is out of such a strongly personal view that comes the dramatic conclusion of the final strophe. Her unqualified prophecy of God's mercy destroys, at one blow, the web of hopelessness she had seemed only to be confirming.

Given the sheer weight of the lamenting which precedes it, we may wonder if that last quatrain has too little substance and comes too late. Significant features pervading the play seem to assure its total effect, however. The versification, we know, does establish a poetic register suitable for a triumphant close. Also, the very dynamics of this about-face have already powered Eve's *fait accompli* against Adam's reluctance, and her usual forthright-

[9] Muir, *op. cit.*, p. 56, observes that the decasyllabic strophes largely contain material which amplifies the basic story and specifies the play's exegetic and didactic element. A full appreciation of versification's role is needed; verse type, syntactic period, and narrative mode likely cannot be predictably related for varieties of OF narrative. Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 59, wisely calls attention to organizational features of discourse in its support of thematic constructs. Such oppositions as Latin/vernacular and decasyllable/octosyllable define what Noomen terms the play's « spécificité » (*Jeu*, p. 8).

ness and sensitivity here make a spiritual breakthrough possible. Its very occasion is defined, moreover, by the play's conspicuous use of the themes of *lignage*, redemption, and history (« what will be written », cf. v. 542). They inform this rendition of Genesis with a strong orientation towards the future. The concluding reversal — from foreboding to anticipation — remains wholly within the temporal context at issue once the fruit is taken.

It is worth noting that, for all the dogmatic iteration linking declaratory statements, there is much in the play that goes unexplained. To the end, Eve herself is at a loss when faced with her past: « Por quei ne fui al criator encline? / Por quei ne tien jo, sire, ta discipline? » (p. 579 f.). How is it, then, that the one who has strayed farthest from God's will should perceive best his mercy? Mystery is at work in the liturgical celebration: it lends dramatic power to belief, and also it intimates, without in any way undermining pretension to doctrine, that spiritual realities exceed the dogmatic boundaries (the Law) traced by the Figura and upheld by Adam [10].

A final justification for the reversal of the last strophe derives from Septuagesima itself. The play assumes that we, its audience, cannot fail to be mindful, from the start, that we are gathered to witness the imminence of redemption at the very beginning of history [11]. Through the postponement of assurance on that score our simple expectation has been transformed into a quickened sense of what salvation means over against the experience of utter darkness.

It is true, of course, that right after Eve's concluding speech

[10] Kaske observes that the Latin stage directions connect with an iconographic commonplace which makes the Figura himself a somewhat mysterious presence, the Old Testament God appearing as Christ; see his *The Character* Figura *in the* Mystère d'Adam, in *Medieval Studies ... Urban Holmes*, Chapel Hill, U. of North Carolina, 1965, p. 107.

[11] It is not clear at what time of year, in what sort of location, and for whom the *Jeu* was performed, if indeed it was not read (cf. Kaske, *ibid.*, p. 107). Against a specifically Septuagesima performance may be offered both technical consideration, as in Frank's *The Genesis and Staging of the* Jeu d'Adam, « P.M.L.A. » 59, 1944, 7-17, and the sort of self-containedness affirmed, for example, in Calin's *Structural and Doctrinal Unity in the* Jeu d'Adam, « Neophilologus » 46, 1962, 249-254.

she and Adam are dragged off into Hell with much gruesome spectacle. The ultimate system of obligation is thus reaffirmed: Eve's deed is punished as all dire predictions are fulfilled. The determined flow of *events*, of standard history, reasserts itself. Eve's glorious hope is by no means subverted, however. Sharply illuminated is the paradox at the heart of this dramatic confrontation of two dispensations, the paradox of despair and hope in complementary relation.

The dovetailing of Latin text and vernacular text in the *Jeu d'Adam* does firmly situate in specific and well-known circumstances a triumphant institution's ambitious spiritual vision. Yet, conceptual and dramatic qualities in the play's first scene and in its characterization of Eve appear to exceed the requirements of a merely dogmatic theatrical production. Truth and spectacle shift aspects and relations as the work unfolds. Hence, any appreciation of ideology, audience, scenic requirements, and the like, must align its conception of legitimate critical response with the play's generous breadth of purpose.

Ultimately it is that very generosity which guarantees the authentic coherence, or specificity, of a dramatic sequence which shifts subject matter and ends abruptly. That is, the Cain-Abel episode, the procession of prophets, and the closure need evaluation in light of a compositional variation engendered vigorously by the representation of the Fall [12]. For the moment, a general question must suffice: may not the somewhat patchwork linking of episodes and the lack of decisive closure often seen in medieval texts signify in a formal way an active concern for possible meanings? Few works surpass the *Jeu d'Adam* in advertizing consequences of a poetic *amplificatio* which traditionally casts an impressive range of discourse about a matter of obvious or pretended importance.

[12] Perhaps the least favorable assessment of the extant play's composition itself comes from Aebischer's introduction to his edition, *Le Mystère d'Adam*, Genève, Droz, and Paris, Minard, 1963. The original, we read, laid stress on redemption, but its awkward adapter willy-nilly inculcates fear of sin. The *Ordo prophetarum* section becomes superfluous whereas the appended *Quinze signes du Jugement* provides a natural conclusion.

In this way and with no little charm does the play confer the exemplary strength of its bond between didacticism and diversified spectacle on the events and meanings at the heart of Septuagesima.

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