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## **"Such night till this I never passed" : How the Dreams of Adam and Eve Lead to the Decision to Fall in Paradise Lost**

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“Such night till this I never passed” : How the Dreams of Adam and Eve Lead to the Decision to  
Fall in *Paradise Lost*

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the idea that the Fall in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton is not a sudden event, but rather Adam and Eve's adherence to temptations that begin long before, specifically in Eve's vision and Adam's thoughts on Eve. This project begins by challenging the ways in which readers of the poem often overlook Eve as they focus solely on Satan or Adam. By looking at Eve's depiction as truly Adam's equal in the poem, this thesis then moves to the idea that temptations are an individual experience that begins first in the mind. Often, readers and scholars explore the actions of the poem, but neglect the inner workings of Adam and Eve. By looking at the thoughts and ideas of Eve and then Adam, we begin to see that the poem presents these two perfect individuals as beset by inner temptations that make them more susceptible to fall if they do not adhere to obedience to God. Eve's vision shows how her thoughts on equality, and the ways in which Adam neglects this equal relationship, lead to her desire for power and total knowledge as offered to her in her vision. Secondly, Adam's first dream and his viewing of Eve's creation shows his vulnerability to the Fall as he chooses to follow Eve above all else. When we come to Book IX, Eve chooses to recreate her vision, this time partaking of the fruit, and Adam chooses to follow Eve in his unfailing devotion to her, and thus they both adhere to their own temptations that were presented early on in the poem. Thus, the Fall is not a sudden event, but rather a result of Adam and Eve's thoughts and mindsets that make them more susceptible to Fall. As a result, we should revisit Adam and Eve to see the ways in which we have been reading these characters incorrectly. By viewing them as equals that struggle mentally with temptations, we see not only their humanity, but also how Milton presents Christian heroism as obedience to God before all beliefs, mindsets, and temptations.

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## Introduction

Often, visions or dreams to the Renaissance mind would signify a religious experience that would then serve as a means to understand oneself in the context of God's plan. In addition, dreams, and especially visions, can be prophetic. Dreams, in a Freudian sense, are the experiences of individuals working out problems in their unconscious. To Milton and the Renaissance reader, dreams would signify an experience in which the fancy is providing images that reason must decipher later upon waking. The Renaissance reader would understand reason and fancy to be intricately related as the reason is one's gift from God to decipher what the fancy provides in order to make one's choices. While most see the Fall in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton as a sudden action that occurs from Satan's tempting of Eve in Book IX, I contend that Eve's prophetic vision in her dream, as she relates it in Book V, in fact shows that her choice to fall begins much earlier. Furthermore, Adam's vehement declaration during his discussion with Raphael before the Fall to follow Eve no matter the consequences presents the dangerous complement to Eve's temptations in her vision. In essence, our "grand parents" begin the decision to fall long before the actual event. Both Adam and Eve have dreams that occur in a state in which fancy is activated at the same time as their reason. In other words, their reason receives the images the fancy presents, but they incorrectly decipher these images in a way that makes them more susceptible to disobedience. Eve chooses to disobey God in her vision to better experience for herself the power of knowledge and the angelic fluidity of motion it provides, and this experience later correlates with her choice to partake of the fruit. Thus, Eve's vision represents the human struggle to understand oneself first through one's psyche in the battle between fancy and reason, a struggle that, if unsuccessful, leads to failure in reality. Thus, the internal Fall must precede the external Fall, and if Eve's Fall occurs, Adam's will follow

because of his own decision to adhere to Eve's choices no matter the consequences. We have been misreading Adam and Eve, but if we reassess these two characters through their internal struggles, we begin to see that their perfection is undermined as a result of imperfect knowledge. They face internal turmoil and must consistently choose to follow God in every action, using their reason to choose obedience when fancy tempts with disobedience. However, as we see, Adam and Eve fall because they adhere to their temptations that began in their early visions and dreams.

### **Existing Scholarship on *Paradise Lost***

In the scholarship on *Paradise Lost*, we see a distinct progression from focus on the power of Milton's poetics, to study of Satan's character, to feminist treatments of Eve, and finally to appraisal of the tendencies of Adam and Eve that render inevitable their fallen state, specifically in Eve's dream. The trend is thus toward less emphasis on poetics and more emphasis on the questions of the self and what this poem has to say about the human experience.<sup>1</sup> Stanley Fish, in *Surprised by Sin*, sees any attempt to investigate any Fall before the actual Fall in Book 9 as problematic (226). By disagreeing with his interpretation of the possibilities of a Fall before the actual Fall, we can move from where scholars have started the discussion to where we are presently.

In classic scholarship, although primarily focused on Milton's poetics, the view of Adam and Eve is that they are blissfully happy before the Fall. Voltaire states, in his "Essay Upon the Civil Wars of France" in *Le Bossu*, that in the poem, "There is softness, tenderness and warmth without lasciviousness; the poet transports himself and us into that state of innocent happiness in which Adam and Eve continued for a short time" (383). But what Voltaire fails to account for is the fact that Eve is more enamored of her own reflection and her own understanding of herself than she is of Adam. She does not seem completely happy in her innocence, especially after her vision, and while they arguably start as happy, the more information we find out about the characters as the poem moves along, the more we see that the seeds of discontent exist from the beginning.

After classic scholarship, scholarly emphasis on Satan as the major focal point of the poem similarly originates in the neglect of detailed analysis of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve are seen as static characters and Satan is mistaken for the changing character—or hero—when in

fact this is not so: he does not change; only the situations and the characters around him change. Percy Bysshe Shelley, although enamored of Satan's character, draws attention to Satan's evil in the psychological anguish he causes his victims. Shelley describes Satan as having "[i]mplacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy..." (394). Satan is patient by not attacking Eve directly first, but rather using her desire for angelic knowledge and equality, and perverting these desires towards disobedience. As a result, Satan instills in Eve the mental anguish that she caused her own Fall by her own desires. Furthermore, Satan uses the time of sleep and rest for Eve as his time of attack, allowing himself no sleep in order to disturb the peace of Eve and tempt her when she is not on guard. However, what Shelley does not account for is that Satan works on something that already exists in Eve, as he cannot create anything new himself; he can only pervert what is already in existence.

Not even C.S. Lewis could resist a detailed discussion of Satan, devoting an entire chapter in *A Preface To Paradise Lost* to him. In this chapter he describes Satan's attractiveness as a character being his display of our tendency toward evil if we do not adhere to good. Lewis ultimately finds that "...Milton expected all readers to perceive that in the long run either the Satanic predicament or else the delighted obedience of Messiah, of Abdiel, of Adam, and of Eve, must be their own" (101). Lewis goes on to describe Satan's psychological predicament as related to Adam and Eve's: "[*Paradise Lost*] is a poem depicting the objective pattern of things, the attempted destruction of that pattern by rebellious self love, and the triumphant absorption of that rebellion into a yet more complex pattern" (132). As Lewis helps us see, these tendencies in Adam and Eve toward "rebellious self love" exist just as much as they exist in Satan. Yet, we can argue that in Adam and Eve these tendencies are even more dynamically portrayed than we

see in Satan who never alters from start to end. Adam and Eve start with obedience, move to “rebellious self love,” then move back to obedience to complete the cycle that becomes the struggle of faith. As a result, they show that the pattern of humanity is toward a renunciation of complete self-love in order to show obedience to God, and thus show love for Him.

Although many scholars are interested in the depth of Satan’s character, most ultimately see him as a tragic figure unable to represent the human struggle. Lewis would disagree with William Blake that Milton was a supporter of Satan, and he would certainly disagree with Shelley who argues that Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost*. In addition, Christopher Hill marks the progression of the Romantics, such as Blake and Shelley, to revive Milton’s radical reputation, yet he shows us that Milton would not have embraced a character like Satan. Milton was

...intolerant of papists though embracing all varieties of Protestantism,  
merciless to the Philistine aristocracy and priest but merciful to the  
excluded vulgar, linking himself with the radicals just as far as his strong  
sense of the necessity of bourgeois society would permit. (642-43)

Hill, although seeming to imply that Milton is sympathetic to the rebellious Satan, instead shows us that Milton could not have embraced this type of character as the Romantics believe he did: Milton’s sense of decorum would not allow it. Instead, Hill shows that rebellion and self-love is a part of human nature, and he opens the discussion for seeing these characteristics in Adam and Eve and how Milton could have sympathized with this more “vulgar” side of human nature. While Satan rebels out of self-love, much the same way Eve rebels in her vision as a result of self-love, we should discuss Eve rather than Satan since the beauty of the human condition is that

Eve ultimately moves from self-love to repentance and thus gains redemption, something Satan refuses.

One problem that scholars discussing Satan attempt to address is a placement of Adam as a representation of all humanity and the focal point of the poem. Walter Savage Landor writes, “It is Adam who acts and suffers most, and on whom the consequences have the most influence. This constitutes him the main character; although Eve is the more interesting, [and] Satan the more energetic...” (395). Yet, Landor admits Eve is more interesting than Adam, and perhaps this has much to do with her psychological complexity as represented in her vision. While T.S. Eliot is content to say that, among other deficiencies, “...from the psychologist’s point of view...[Milton’s poem] is unsatisfactory” (399), one can see that there is general disagreement among scholars who discuss Satan. In fact, Christopher Hill shows how Milton was ahead of his time with his radical thinking and that, “Milton was Freud’s favourite poet” (641). Kenneth Gross discusses Satan as a “...peculiar and persuasive illusion of what a self or character might be” (421). Helen Vendler, too, praises Satan’s psychological depth by saying that “...the chastened sometimes forget the emotions that attended them in their earlier passion of pride and vaunting desire...[And Milton] pours all these emotions, in unquestionably authentic form, into his Satan...” (524). Thus, these scholars refute Eliot’s claim that Milton’s poem is psychologically “unsatisfactory,” but they also point to another character usually neglected in favor of Adam. Eve shares this psychological depth with Satan just as she shares her vision with him, and thus she should be revisited to see that all of the above descriptions of Satan’s psychological depth can more fittingly be applied to Adam and Eve.

As we move to feminist scholarship that attempts to revisit Eve, we see that at times her voice is ironically taken away by the very scholars who fervently try to expose the problems in

*Paradise Lost*. Eve is a complete character just as much as Adam, the only difference being she is neglected by scholars who see her treated as inferior and denied equality. Julia M. Walker argues that Eve is gendered from the moment she first sees Adam. Eve "...submits to the arbitrary gender displacement, coming to see Adam as at once the generative image of and better than herself..." (516). Walker attempts to show that the problem of *Paradise Lost* is that Eve is treated as an inferior and is unable to determine her worth on her own. However, the most positive statement by a feminist scholar is given by Janet E. Halley who points to Barbara K. Lewalski, Joan Malory Webber, and Diane Kelsey McColley who she says, "...argue convincingly that [Milton's] Eve, far from being the mere image of deficiency and perversion, is endowed with subjectivity as genuine as Adam's" (662). Although many scholars look to other issues and do not always come back to this point, for this discussion we are going to focus on this statement and see why this is the case, rather than strictly looking at deficiencies in the poem. While it is true that she is often denied her equality and subjectivity by many readers and at times by the poem itself, she nevertheless is the equal to Adam.

As we move to the most current scholarship, we see an attempt to come to terms with the perfection of Adam and Eve as human beings and how that relates to their imperfect knowledge. As a result, some scholars question how we are to read Adam and Eve's uncertainties before the Fall. Some critics have looked at Eve's dream to see whether she has already fallen before the actual Fall, but in recent years this discussion has gone cold when in fact it should continue as our understanding of Adam and Eve grows. Stanley Fish writes in *Surprised by Sin*, "The reader who makes the dream a cause or even a prediction of the Fall compromises prelapsarian freedom, and renders himself incapable of understanding what the loss of that freedom involves" (226). Fish appears to contradict himself with two different objectives: first, he claims that the

reader must form his or her own opinions of the text, yet he also seems to want to control the reader's interpretation. Although Fish believes looking for a prediction of the Fall in Eve's dream is a misunderstanding of prelapsarian freedom, on the contrary this starting point affords a better way of understanding how freedom, and the imperfect knowledge inherent in it, affects the later Fall. For this first human couple must make serious choices based on imperfect knowledge and their own temptations with arguably more severe consequences in this prelapsarian world if they should fail.

In recent years, scholars have formed two camps: those who see Eve's dream as an indicator that she is already fallen before the actual Fall; and those who believe Eve's dream has nothing to do with her later decision to eat the forbidden fruit. A third, neglected camp is comprised of those who believe that Eve's dream does not show that she is fallen, but that her choices and mindset in the dream have something to do with her later choice to fall. As Diana Treviño Benet articulates the existing scholarship as of 2006, "More than fifty years ago, E.M.W. Tillyard and, following him, Millicent Bell and others expressed the view that the dream shows Eve to be fallen or partly fallen...Other scholars, including Wayne Shumaker, John Diekhoff, Diane McColley, and Barbara Lewalski...argue that Eve is sinless until she eats the forbidden fruit" (38). Benet goes on to argue that Milton attempts to show through the dream that Eve is innocent until the actual Fall, and that Satan, through the dream, attempts to reach Eve's animal spirits in order to influence her decision-making, thus making Satan the guilty party. However, Robert Wignura emphasizes Eve's agency in her dream when he writes,

Diana Treviño Benet reiterates the problematic nature of the dream. By comparing Milton's use of the demonically inspired dream to works by Crashaw and Cowley, Benet emphasizes how Milton walks the line

between an extramental source of evil and the integrity of the individual will. However, in doing so, she entertains the question of Eve's innocence, a point that, I argue, is a seduction that is also somewhat beside the point...[Millicent Bell and William B. Hunter Jr.] focus closely on Satan's machinations in the dream sequence. A different approach on the nature of dreams is Elizabeth Bellamy's 'Milton's Freud: The Law of Psychoanalysis in Eve's Dream.' Bellamy argues a paradox: that the intramental violation that occurs within the dream is the origin of guilt/Law and that the extramental command already presupposes the preexistence of violation." (108)

Wiznura examines Eve's dream and shows how she is changed and must use her fancy along with her reason to make the correct choice of obedience, thus also continuing this idea of "intramental violation" and showing that Eve is affected by this experience. However, Wiznura's refusal to examine the parallels between Eve's dream and the Fall in Book IX ultimately leaves us with the discussion we must begin here, by taking what Wiznura started, but looking at the way in which the dreams of both Adam and Eve lead to mindsets and beliefs that make them susceptible to temptation and that result in their Fall in Book IX.

## Eve's Vision

To understand the importance of Eve's vision, it is important to pause and examine Milton's intent in writing the epic. Milton invokes the "Heav'nly Muse" (1.5) and urges, "...what in me is dark / Illumine, what is low raise and support; / That to the highth of this great argument / I may assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men" (1.22-26). This invocation of the Muse, while serving Milton's need to fill the necessary trope for the epic, also serves to show his emphasis on the poet's desire to soar above the earth to "the highth of this great argument," height taking on more than one meaning, and indicating the power of divine knowledge. Exploring this idea was a new endeavor for Milton. In his Introduction to Book II of *The Reason of Church Government Urged against Prelaty*, Milton prefers to write in the "cool element of prose," distinguishing himself from "...a poet, soaring in the high region of his fancies with his garland and singing robes about him..." (334). However, since Milton is taking on the robes of a poet in *Paradise Lost*, it is difficult not to see a shift toward a desire to move beyond obedience to reason and instead try the freedom of "soaring in the high region of his fancies" as Eve will do in her vision. Furthermore, Harold Bloom observes that Milton specifically sets himself above his precursors of Ovid, Homer, and Virgil. Bloom states that,

[b]y arranging his precursors in series, Milton figuratively reverses his obligation to them, for his stationing crowds them between the visionary truth of his poem (carefully aligned with Biblical truth) and his darkened present (which he shares with Galileo)...Milton does what Bacon hoped to do; Milton and Galileo become ancients, and Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Dante, Tasso, Spenser become belated moderns. (565)

Bloom believes Milton to have shown his debt to the great writers that came before him by making his work an attempt to respond to their greatness, but also situating himself in such a way that his poem surpasses them all simply by the biblical subject of the world. One could argue that Milton simply writes on a topic he loves and that is a part of his being: his faith. However, as we know that originally Milton wanted to write an epic on Arthur and his significance to England, and as we also know that he rejected this idea in favor of the idea of *Paradise Lost*, it is difficult not to see this move as calculated and as a way to do honor to his precursors in a way that situated himself as the most prominent of them, a spot of glory and honor that one would not have expected Milton would desire in his earlier humble declaration that he is not a poet who “[soars] in the high region of his fancies with his garland and singing robes about him” (*The Reason of Church Government* 334). In Bloom’s description of what Milton does with *Paradise Lost*, we see that Milton is tempted by the same glory as Eve in her vision. Milton must look to his muse Urania to temper this fanciful desire to seek his own glory as a poet, instead creating an epic on a subject with implications beyond himself and moving towards the common good. Unfortunately, Eve has no muse to guide her when she soars, only the prideful Satan who has already soared beyond his own good, and the good of all. Milton avoids Satan’s trap by consistently looking to his heavenly muse for inspiration and, more importantly, guidance. Eve is not afforded the same resources and must make her choices using only her reason: a powerful guide, but also fallible.

Milton’s reliance on a feminine muse also shows that he is not trapped completely in the sexism of his time: he is liberal and whether he will or not, his poem serves the needs of readers of all times in its emphasis on equality between the sexes. While the muses are traditionally female, Milton shows a reliance on their guidance that goes beyond merely an aid in his writing:

he looks to these muses for acceptance and encouragement. This relationship Milton sets up shows that despite the typical use of the muse by a male to achieve his glory, Milton sees his glory as not his own, but rather a product of his reciprocal relationship with his muse and God. Unlike Homer or any of the ancient Greek writers, Milton does not take any of the glory for himself. As we see in Milton's *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton viewed marriage as a relationship of intellectual equals. Now, as Milton writes his epic alone with only his muse to guide him, we see a resurfacing of this idea of equality of intellect among the sexes as Milton needs his female muse of the beginning of the poem not only in the traditional sense, but also in the sense of needing a female of equal, if not greater, intellect to guide him and support him. Janet E. Halley describes the way in which males use females as conduits to other males and shows how Milton breaks down these relationships in his invocation of the sister muses in *Lycidas*, but also in his invocation to Urania in *Paradise Lost* by making himself the conduit between the muses and readers (668). However, ultimately she concludes that this is still sexist because Milton, like other males, may put his reliance on a female, yet doing so only furthers the transcendence of "the male mind that defines both its members" and not "the heterosexual couple that it requires" (674). Halley describes Milton's conclusion of *Lycidas* saying, "He asks the Muse to drive far off not the 'rout that made the hideous roar,' the Thracian women who destroyed Orpheus in the earlier poem (l.61)—but their 'barbarous dissonance' and savage clamor.'...It is not the women but their unharmonious noise that must be driven off: Urania, Eve, the female figure must participate in this text, as a harmonic 'other half' whose 'meaning' originates in male intention" (674). It appears that Halley pushes her argument too far here, diminishing her earlier important insight. We should not conflate *Lycidas* with *Paradise Lost* as they are two different poems with two different functions. But if we must combine them as

Halley does, it is important to see that Milton is not dismissing the women of the text, nor is he dismissing their unique voice. Halley tries to combine Eve and Urania with the Thracian women to make a point, but what she neglects to see is that Milton specifically does not ask for the removal of the women in his poem because they are an important part of the whole picture. What he dismisses is the voice they use when it brings about discord and savageness, much the same way he seeks to dismiss this same type of rhetoric in Satan. Milton does not argue for a complete removal of their whole voice, and in fact he does not dismiss Urania or Eve, instead allowing them to speak and uniquely portray themselves. Milton, as both a poet and a conduit between the muses and his readers, breaks down the traditional relationship between males and females and shows Adam and Eve as individuals who are equally able to choose to stand or fall on their own and thus are equally culpable when they disobey God's "easy prohibition." As a result, *Paradise Lost* invites readers to view Adam and Eve as a strong couple, yet also as two individuals who must work out their own problems in their own psyche in order to avoid the Fall. In this way, the poem questions the notion that Eve is only a conduit between Adam and Satan, and instead shows her to be the important other half of the first human couple.

We also see that, to God, Eve is not an inferior to Adam and sexism is only brought into Paradise by Satan. James Grantham Turner reminds readers that, "[T]he obvious ideological function of lines such as 'Hee for God only, shee for God in him' and 'Not equal, as their sex not equal seemd' is undermined when we reflect that the only observer, the only subject to whom these qualities 'seemed' a product of 'their sex' is Satan himself" (643). Satan establishes the idea that Adam and Eve are not equals and he also creates the inferiority of Eve in his own mind, and the minds of readers, without any justification from God or the angels. God does not see Eve as an inferior, and when Michael provides Adam with the vision of biblical history that is to

come, God speaks to Eve directly as she sleeps (Turner 652, n.2). This signifies that while Adam's wisdom is in discursive reasoning, Eve's reasoning is more intuitive and as such similar to the angels'. This also highlights that they will fall differently: Eve will fall from a failed line of discursive logic, whereas Adam will be convinced to eat in a passionate decision without any reasoning. They are a perfect and equal pair together, as they can combine their separate forms of wisdom to reject Satan's temptation if they so choose, but otherwise separately they will fall. Satan sets down his sexism as fact, but as with Satan's other assertions, we as readers must ask whether the text actually supports this view. Turner also remarks that

Most importantly of all, neither Eve nor Adam says a word about subordination or inferiority when they describe the most sacred moment of their lives, when God spoke directly to them and presented them with their mate... The 'voice' that leads Eve to her husband (sometimes assumed to be God, sometimes a 'genial angel') is significantly devoid of gender, and defines marriage in terms of partnership and motherhood; and when Adam retells this scene, borrowing from conversations with Eve, he mentions only nuptial sanctity and marriage 'rites'—though the voice combines several roles later assigned to father, priest, and mother, it does not dictate obedience. (657)

Similarly, Halley writes

...*Paradise Lost* as a whole rebukes...misogyny, insisting instead on the incorporation of woman into its picture of social and poetic harmony. It constructs a sexual poetics that can accommodate rather than eliminate the female subject...But the result is a newly heterosexual form of

transcendence that incorporates the female voice and the female will only  
by subsuming them in male intention. (669)

While this is arguably true, it seems more important to focus on the fact that the poem needs Eve in order to show the fullness of human nature and wisdom. Staying in Paradise and remaining obedient to God serves not only Adam's intention, but also Eve's. They share this intention, and Eve does not exist purely for "poetic harmony" any more than Adam does, both being unique in their own right, but harmony does exist when they are together as Milton wishes us to see the perfection that can exist when two equal intellectuals with different capabilities work together.

C.S. Lewis, too, notices the importance of Eve's character in the poem when he reminds us that Eve is like a Queen and most do not appreciate her inherent royalty. He says, "In considering [Adam's] relations with Eve we must constantly remind ourselves of the greatness of both personages" (119). Lewis then goes on to say, "This royalty is less apparent in Eve, partly because she is in fact Adam's inferior, in her double capacity of wife and subject, but partly, I believe, because her humility is often misunderstood" (120). For this reason, we must see that although Milton might believe Eve to be the inferior to Adam, in the same way the Son is inferior to God in Milton's non-Trinitarian view, this does not mean she does not share a similarly important role to Adam. They have different roles to play, but neither is inherently of less value than the other in the same way that the Son does not have less value than God. Eve, like the Son, is involved in a reciprocal relationship: Adam relies on her to reflect his own logic and strength. Conversely, Adam reflects Eve's emotionality and softness. Adam demanded, and received, an equal to share his life.

In Eve's vision, two psychologically complex characters are juxtaposed to highlight their similarities and their relation to the human condition. While Eve sleeps, Satan attacks her out of

a sense of familiarity as he sees himself in Eve. He knows what caused his own fall, so he uses the same arguments to seduce Eve. Their similarity, even though the scene is Paradise, creates a tension that brings back the drama of Hell with which we started the epic. Thus, Satan attacks Eve having seen his struggle in her. In Adam, he sees undying devotion to Eve. As a result, if Satan can cause Eve to fall, he can assume that Adam will soon follow as a result of his fervent love.

Barbara K. Lewalski claims that “Milton’s most brilliant analysis of human psychology occurs in...the dispute which occasioned Adam and Eve’s separation” (472); however, I would argue that a more psychologically complex scene precedes the dispute as we begin to understand Eve’s desire and her peril in Book IV. After Satan breaks into Paradise, he inhabits the bodies of animals to get close to Eve, and the angels that pursue him find him

Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve;  
Assaying by his dev’lish art to reach  
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge  
Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams;  
Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint  
Th’ animal spirits that from pure blood arise  
Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise  
At least distempered, discontented thoughts,  
Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires  
Blown up with high conceits engend’ring pride. (4.800-809)

This is simply a dream created by Satan, but as is clear in our postlapsarian world, the effects of dreams linger long after one is awake, and what was conceived during the night can become the

reality of the day. Satan turns Eve's mind to "distempered, discontented thoughts, / Vain hopes, vain aims, [and] inordinate desires" (4.807-809). Eve is a pure creature, but Satan is nevertheless able to access what is already present: a desire to know the power that Adam obviously enjoys. Adam has a direct connection to God, whereas Eve was made from Adam, and he forces her to look to him for guidance and as an intermediary between God and the angels, and herself. Eve longs for the direct association and equality she had with the genderless voice that guided her to Adam after her creation. As Turner notes:

M[ilton] did perhaps assume that God had the appearance of a human male: certainly He always appears to Adam as a male, as does Raphael...But Adam's (and [Milton's]) uncertainty about how God appeared to Eve before she met Adam..., and the fact that God communicates directly to Eve while his messenger is instructing Adam in Books XI-XII, could suggest that God's manly looks are put on only for Adam, according to the principle of accommodation (i.e. we must conceive 'Him' the way "He" chooses to communicate 'Himself' to us)....  
(652, n. 2)

The narrator describes the voice as shapeless and arguably could take any form imaginable, but the important point is that it is not a voice that demands Eve act as an inferior. The voice first teaches her that equality can, and should, exist in Paradise, before she learns Adam's idea that masculinity must equate to superiority. All she knows is the voice until she meets Adam and must learn to follow his representation of masculinity and question the fine line between leadership and assumed superiority. As Turner notes, masculinity is important to Adam, and every character, except for Eve, appears to him in masculine form, so he creates his belief that

God is masculine and therefore Eve, as feminine, is different from and inferior to him. As we shall see, Adam admits to questioning this notion of his superiority, rather looking at Eve's equality and his own subservience to her. Nevertheless, Adam never admits this to Eve. All Eve sees is the Adam that does not waver in his belief that masculinity means superiority. As a result, instead of finding equality and intellectual appreciation from Adam, Eve finds one who treats her as inferior and denies her the partnership that he sought from God when he demanded she be made. As will be seen, Satan gives Eve a direct connection to an angelic state, a state of freedom and mobility she has hitherto not experienced since she was created, and which she longs to experience again as her right in Paradise.

In Book V, Adam wakes up peacefully from his sleep but with "...wonder...find[s] unawakened Eve / With tresses discomposed and glowing cheek / As through unquiet rest" (5.9-11). Earlier Eve's hair is described as "...unadorned golden tresses.../ Disheveled, but [with] wanton ringlets waved / As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied / Subjection..." (4.305-308). For Milton, Eve's long, golden hair is a sign of her subject position. Outwardly Eve's appearance shows her internal change and serves to show her to be the code for an "unruly" woman with unkempt hair, rejecting subordination. Yet as Turner reminds us, "It is important to recall...that the text of Genesis says nothing whatever about male superiority or rule over the female, until the latter is imposed as a punishment after the fall" (649-50). While Milton is producing a creative interpretation of these biblical events and thus cannot be said to follow Genesis completely, it is difficult to imagine that he would veer so far from scripture to posit sexism as an inherent feature of Paradise. Rather, as Milton carefully portrays Adam and Eve and gives us a look into their dreams, the poem forces us to see that any sexist notions of superiority or inferiority are brought in by the mindsets of the characters and their choices.

Furthermore, Turner says that although “[a]t times [Eve] even seems to embroider her secondary role, attributing God-like features to Adam, and thus deepening the idolatry to which her author unwittingly condemned her from the first...[Adam] is not the ‘Author’ of Eve at all, unless the paper is the author of the book” (657). Turner reminds us that Eve, while at times leading the reader to believe she enjoys her ‘secondary role’ is not fit for such a role. However, Turner wrongfully attributes Eve’s predicament to be a product of the author’s creation, when in fact it is a product of Adam’s mindset and his choice to view Eve as subordinate. Eve saw herself as an equal to the shapeless, genderless voice, then she first experienced condescension at the hands of Adam when he showed her that she is only equal to him when some other masculine figure is not around. Thus, when Eve wakes and her hair is “discomposed,” we see that the dream has given her thoughts of rising above her station and has disturbed her acquiescence to subjection, both to Adam and God. In essence, the dream awakens her to the possibility of her own individuality.

As Eve relates her vision to Adam at the beginning of Book V, we see that she has been presented with the choice to strive above her sphere or to trust in God’s rule. Like most humans of a Renaissance disposition, she chooses to experience the power of infinite knowledge while simultaneously attempting to understand her place in the world. After describing her happiness at seeing Adam’s face upon waking, Eve says,

...I this night,  
Such night till this I never passed, have dreamed,  
If dreamed, not as I oft am wont, of thee,  
...But of offense and trouble, which my mind  
Knew never till this irksome night; methought  
Close at mine ear one called me forth to walk

With gentle voice, I thought it thine.... (5.30-37)

Eve logically justifies her following of the voice as obedience to Adam, and by extension, to God's will in terms of His created hierarchy: she thought Adam spoke, so she followed him. She followed a voice when she first met Adam, so there is nothing strange in her decision to follow yet another shapeless voice. After this voice praises and flatters Eve, she says, "I rose as at thy call, but found thee not" (5.48). At this point, Eve has the choice to reject the flattery of this voice that is not Adam's and simply ignore it or continue to follow it. Yet, Eve is curious and, by choosing to follow the voice, shows not only a wish to discover the owner of this voice on her own, even if Adam is not present, but also a desire to understand herself in relation to the world around her and possibly recreate her encounter with the voice that led her to Adam upon her creation.

After Eve follows the voice, the dream becomes a vision of what could happen if she were to partake of the forbidden fruit and enjoy the freedom and knowledge of an angel. Eve goes on to meet Satan, not knowing it is he, and finds him as "One shaped and winged like one of those from Heav'n / By us oft seen" (5.55-6). Satan gives Eve what she lacks in Paradise: open and personal communion with the angels, one-on-one. After spying on the couple and seeing in Eve his own struggle, Satan is able to emphasize the lack by showing that in the vision she is an equal, whereas in reality she is kept on the outskirts, unable to enjoy the discourse she enjoyed in her vision. While it is true she is present at the beginning of the discussion with Raphael when he arrives after the vision, and she leaves when she so chooses, she is relegated to the shadows. One could easily forget Eve is there at all since Raphael only takes note of her beauty, and then focuses his attention on Adam. Milton tells us that "[Adam] with his consorted Eve / The story heard attentive..." (7.50-51) but when Adam

... by his count'nance seemed  
Ent'ring on studious thoughts abstruse, which Eve  
Perceiving where she sat retired in sight,  
With lowliness majestic from her seat,  
...Rose, and went forth among her fruits and flow'rs...(8.39-44)

And thus is Eve dismissed from the discussion, back among the flowers, the symbol of the beauty Adam loves in Paradise, and now that he sees in Eve, his flower.

Some may see Eve's departure as Milton's way of portraying Eve as inferior to Adam and incapable of understanding these "thoughts abstruse." On the contrary it underscores her desire to not discuss matters beyond this world and the paradise they live in. Adam and Eve were created from the earth, and Eve shows a more grounded understanding of this by choosing to abstain from this discussion that has gone beyond the knowledge of the war in Heaven and the Christian heroism of Abdiel, moving to knowledge that Adam desires, but Eve is content without. Eve's reasoning is of a more intuitive kind, as we see later in Book XII when she understands everything that Michael has shown Adam through a vision. Adam is more discursive and must work through the issues he does not understand. The narrator even reminds us that:

Yet went [Eve] not as not capable her ear  
Of what was high: such pleasure she reserved,  
Adam relating, she sole auditress;  
Her husband the relater she preferred  
Before the angel.... (8.48-53)

Eve can comprehend this discourse, yet she chooses not to be a part of it. In addition, she prefers to discuss matters solely with Adam, emphasizing that he does treat her in some respects as an equal when they are alone, more so than the angel who does not take note of her beyond her beauty. Furthermore, although Eve is “retired in sight” of Raphael and Adam, they do not take notice of her during the discussion, only when she leaves and “...from about her shot darts of desire / Into all eyes to wish her still in sight” (8.62-3). The emphasis is on her appeal to the eye and not her appeal to the intellect, and once she leaves, Raphael resumes the conversation as if nothing happened beyond the loss of a pleasurable decoration. As a result, Eve’s treatment as an equal by Satan in angel form during her vision, coupled with Raphael and Adam’s later treatment of her during their discussion, allows her to believe she is not equal in Paradise, and as a result makes her more susceptible to fall.

When relating to Adam the bold angel’s eating of the fruit in her vision, Eve tries to argue for her continuing innocence by describing herself in contrast with the angel. She says, “...Me damp horror chilled / At such bold words vouched with a deed so bold: / But he thus overjoyed, ‘O fruit divine, / ...Forbidden here, it seems, as only fit / For gods, yet able to make gods of men’” (5.65-70). Eve at this point is still obedient to God in her horror at the audacious pride and confidence of this angel. However, we see that Eve is still curious and interested by what he says and does through her simple choice to stay. Satan has said that the fruit can “make gods of men” and here Eve should have stopped listening, but by staying, she begins to accept Satan’s claim that this fruit can make *her* like a god. In Eve’s world Adam acts like a god to her, so she constantly sees the possibility of more than one god. The word “god” also is used to mean angel, and as Eve knows there are many angels, she can believe in the possibility of plural gods

in more than one sense. Thus, she is led to believe in the possibility of becoming a powerful god, or angel, herself.

Eve's fatal error—an error that will be fully manifest in Book IX—is that she stays to experience the finale of Satan's illusion. Satan in angelic form offers Eve her destruction saying:

Here, happy creature, fair angelic Eve,  
Partake thou also; happy though thou art,  
Happier thou may'st be, worthier canst not be:  
Taste this, and be henceforth among the gods  
Thyself a goddess, not to earth confined,  
But sometimes in the air, as we, sometimes  
Ascend to heav'n, by merit thine, and see  
What life the gods live there, and such live thou.

She then relates to Adam,

So saying, he drew nigh, and to me held,  
Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part  
Which he had plucked; the pleasant savory smell  
So quickened appetite, that I, me thought,  
Could not but taste. Forthwith up to the clouds  
With him I flew, and underneath beheld  
The earth outstretched immense, a prospect wide  
And various: wond'ring at my flight and change  
To this high exaltation... (5.74-90)

Gordon Teskey remarks that, “Eve does not taste the fruit in her dream. There is a break in her consciousness between the moment when she feels she can do nothing other than taste and the moment when she finds herself soaring in the clouds. The break is important” (5.85-86, n.), because it shows that this is a vision and not reality, but it also shows the temptation of the Satanic lie: it is what Satan wants Eve to believe is the result of disobedience. Satan leads Eve to believe the connection between eating and then soaring exists when in reality the consequence will be the opposite when she actually partakes of the fruit. She experiences vicariously the feigned result of tasting: soaring among the clouds and looking down on the world when she is accustomed to looking up to Adam. Satan, in angelic form, offers her mobility and freedom that she cannot know trapped in what Satan has deemed an inferior sphere. She also enjoys this experience guilt-free. By believing she has no choice but to eat the fruit when it is offered, she is freed from any moral dilemma and can enjoy the poetic ideal of soaring above the world and seeing with God’s eyes. She thus convinces her psyche that first, eating of the fruit is inevitable when she is tempted, and secondly, that the results are enjoyable. And thus she has made herself susceptible to fall before the actual trial between herself and the serpent, and all that is left is to physically eat the fruit.

Finally, when Eve wakes up and recounts her dream, she convinces Adam that she repents of the vision. She tells him, “...suddenly / My guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down / And fell asleep; but O how glad I waked / To find this but a dream!” (5.90-93). In actuality she shows the distress of being taken away from the enjoyable results of that vision. The phrase “sunk down” shows she is aware that she has been returned and lowered to her human status. Eve is distressed, believing she has disobeyed God, but the greater anguish for her is leaving the enjoyable vision of power and living like an angel. She is interrupted and sent

back to what she now views as an inferior sphere that does not allow this intimate angelic interaction. Later, when Eve wishes to separate from Adam in order to work more efficiently, she is actually revealing her true desire to discover her own potentiality. Efficiency and work are far from her mind when she asks the serpent in Book IX, "...where grows the tree, from hence how far?" (9.616) and finally says to the serpent, "Lead then" (9.631). The vision has piqued her curiosity enough to allow herself to be led to her doom when she is presented with the opportunity.

The tendency of readers of *Paradise Lost* is to focus on Adam, God, the angels, and Satan. Often Eve is overlooked, as is the importance of her psychological depth. Eve's struggle mirrors the struggle of us all. We often contemplate life and, if we are unhappy or discontent, wonder why we are in the spheres we are in and whether we can escape them. Rather than looking at the actual Fall as an external experience, it is important to look at the Fall as an internal struggle. Eve's vision is a subconscious soliloquy and its power is ineffable. If one could quietly soar above the world, experiencing a god-like and angelic state of freedom and total knowledge, escaping from one's sphere, would one resist this and put faith in obedience when one's true worth in the eyes of God is neglected by one's most intimate companion?

### **Adam's Recollection of His Dream and Eve's Creation**

Most readers of *Paradise Lost* are content to assume the Fall occurs suddenly in Book IX as a result of Eve's succumbing to temptation, ultimately leading to Adam's choice to rashly follow her no matter what doom awaits. Yet, if we look carefully at each character, we can see that Adam made a conscious choice to share his life—and fate—with Eve earlier in the poem, a choice that would lead to his later decision to fall with his "other half."

Just as Eve's Fall is predicted by her dream, so too does Adam's Fall appear likely during his recollection to Raphael in Book VIII of his initial view of Paradise and his experience of Eve's creation—a recollection that shows his choice to put his devotion to Eve above his devotion to God. Adam stubbornly obtains the audience of Raphael to listen to him describe the events shortly after his creation as he remembers it. Adam, after hearing Raphael's account of the war in heaven, tries to match the angel's poetic diction in his description of the beauty of his first view of Paradise and God as presented to him in a dream. Adam says,

While thus I called, and strayed I knew not wither,  
From where I first drew air, and first beheld  
This happy light, when answer none returned,  
On a green shady bank profuse of flow'rs  
Pensive I sat me down; there gentle sleep  
First found me, and with soft oppression seized  
My drowsèd sense, untroubled, though I thought  
I then was passing to my former state  
Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve:  
When suddenly stood at my head a dream,

Whose inward apparition gently moved  
My fancy to believe I yet had being,  
And lived: one came, methought, of shape divine,  
And said, 'Thy mansion wants thee, Adam, rise,  
First man, of men innumerable ordained  
First father, called by thee I come thy guide  
To the garden of bliss, thy seat prepared.'  
So saying, by the hand he took me raised,  
And over fields and waters, as in air  
Smooth sliding without step, last led me up  
A woody mountain; whose high top was plain,  
A circuit wide, enclosed, with goodliest trees  
...Each tree  
Load'n with fairest fruit, that hung to the eye  
Tempting, stirred in me sudden appetite  
To pluck and eat; whereat I waked, and found  
Before mine eyes all real, as the dream  
Had lively shadowed... (8.283-311)

Adam falls asleep for the first time after his creation and he experiences something similar to Eve's dream that gives him a taste of the glory of angelic motion. Just as Eve has a guide that appeared angelic, Adam too has a guide "of shape divine." Although it is not prudent to doubt that Adam's guide is in fact God or the Son, one can draw the similarities between this dream and Eve's to see that the angelic or divine guide can only lead these characters so far: they both

have the gift of reason and are thus able to make choices, for good or evil, about the images that are presented to them. Adam admits that this dream "...moved / My fancy to believe I yet had being, / And lived," (8.293-95) showing that his fancy is allowing him to believe this dream to be real, but it is only after he wakes that this is confirmed. This is all the more reason that Adam should understand how real Eve's dream would seem to her. Adam, like Eve, is raised to heights unobtainable by a mere mortal, and tastes the heavenly delight of unfettered motion. The guiding presence in Adam's dream leads him ultimately to Paradise, but here Adam faces his first trial and is warned not to eat the forbidden fruit. Adam describes the trees as

Load'n with fairest fruit, that hung to the eye  
Tempting, stirr[ing] in me sudden appetite  
To pluck and eat; whereat I waked, and found  
Before mine eyes all real, as the dream  
Had lively shadowed... (8.307-311)

Just the sight of the fruit tempts Adam to taste disobedience and enjoy the power of this divine presence. Yet, like Eve, Adam wakes, only to find that everything he dreamed was a fanciful version of reality and all of its attendant choices. As Adam acts as the head of himself and Eve, Adam enjoys a taste of the power of God. He is Eve's god in a sense, and so this vision for him is based in later reality. However, as his dream ends before tasting of the fruit, we see that Adam's attitude toward Eve in Paradise is based on a recollection of this dream and the power he was denied at the last moment—power that he believes is his right as the first created. Furthermore, the description of Adam's resting spot is "profuse of flow'rs" (8.286), a minor detail, but pointing to the greater significance of Adam's enjoyment and comfort when surrounded by beauty. This is also where he chooses to sleep with the emphasis being Adam as

the subject choosing to sit among these flowers: “I sat me down” (8.287). Adam enjoys beauty, and when he wakes, this is strengthened from his dream of Paradise. Later, when Adam sees Eve, this enjoyment of beauty will be foremost in his mind. However, the divine guide is visibly present in Adam’s dream to remind him that he is not to live as if he is the god of Paradise, believing himself to be Eve’s superior, for there is always a higher power to whom he must answer. This dream is also a warning that he should follow the divine presence of God as his guide, and not become enamored of things external to God's will, no matter how tempting—or how beautiful.

Scholars typically avoid talking about Adam’s dream, being more focused on his outward heroism rather than the inner turbulence of his mind. This trend started in some of the earliest scholarship on *Paradise Lost* as Samuel Johnson notes that “[b]oth before and after the Fall, the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained” (484). Furthermore, Johnson disagrees with Dryden’s interpretation of Adam saying, “Dryden, petulantly and indecently, denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome; but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together” (484). While it is true that one cannot judge Adam’s virtue based on his success, this could also be said of Eve too. Too often critics place the blame on Eve, when in fact both characters are equally culpable. Furthermore, Walter Savage Landor writes, “It is Adam who acts and suffers most, and on whom the consequences have the most influence. This constitutes him the main character; although Eve is the more interesting, [and] Satan the more energetic...” (395). Landor continues this idea that Adam is the one that is not guilty, but rather blameless and primary in the poem. To defend Adam so vehemently is to show a tendency toward removing responsibility from any male regardless of the guilt of the crime—an atrocious tendency that

continues into modern culture. The fact is that the poem does not remove the blame from Adam, but instead shows the equal culpability of both characters in their decision to fall, a decision that Adam arrives at within his mind.

This trend toward defending Adam continues through scholarship even as the criticism moves away from discussions of style and poetics and toward an understanding of the characters. C.S. Lewis looks at Adam as representative of us all, refusing to look deeper into Eve's role in the poem. Lewis spends his chapter on Adam and Eve in his *Preface to Paradise Lost* focusing more on Adam than Eve, only showing how she relates to Adam and not how she is a unique character. Lewis says, "I wanted an Adam and Eve whom I could patronize; and when Milton made it clear that I was not to be allowed to do anything of the sort, I was repelled" (116). Here Lewis admits that Milton, and more importantly the poem as a whole, will not allow us to patronize these two chief characters, and yet the tendency in scholarship has been to do just that to Eve, while ignoring the mindset of Adam that makes him susceptible to fall.

By investigating why the poem will not allow us to patronize Adam and Eve, we can see that it is because they are both of equal standing, perfect and royal despite their imperfect knowledge. Lewis describes the "wisdom and sanctitude" that both Adam and Eve possess, emphasizing the royal nature of both characters (118), but then later says that "[t]his royalty is less apparent in Eve, partly because she is in fact Adam's inferior, in her double capacity of wife and subject" (120). Lewis begins the groundwork for showing that Eve deserves more study in this poem as a royal and grand persona, but then misinterprets her "inferiority." While it is true that Milton does present Eve as both the subject of and wife to Adam, yet Eve is also presented as equal to Adam fundamentally and intellectually. Adam demanded from God an equal, and if

he wanted an inferior he would have been content with the animals. Instead he wanted someone to share reason and share a life, as an equal.

After Lewis, scholars continue to focus on the ways in which we can relate to Adam, but neglect a deeper analysis of the flaws of Adam's thinking. Stanley Fish describes the final scene of the poem saying that, "With Adam, we exit from the poem into experience; but we can return to it, as he returns to the memory of Paradise, for strength and sustenance" (536). Like Raphael, Fish is content to ignore Eve and to dismiss the fact that Adam does not exit Paradise alone; he leaves with Eve and can thus share his memories of Paradise with her. Fish only focuses on our relation to Adam, much the way most scholars, with the exception of feminist criticism that looks specifically at Eve's treatment in *Paradise Lost*, focus on Adam as the primary character of attention, the Samson that is fooled by his Delilah.

In examining the ways in which we can relate to Adam, some scholars have taken notice of Adam's dream, but do not develop its significance to see why it makes Adam susceptible to fall. Samuel Johnson takes notice of Adam's dream, but does not push his observation further. Johnson says, "Adam's discourse of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety: it is the speech of a man acquainted with many other men" (490). The truth in this statement must lead us to realize that something is going on in this "discourse of dreams" or the recollection of Adam's dreams that deserves our attention. It does seem that Adam is "acquainted with many other men" in the fact that his dialogue anticipates human experience and the danger of allowing the love one feels for another person to drive one to forsake all else, being unfamiliar with this new passion. As Freud says, we as human beings "...[hold] fast to the original, passionate striving for a positive fulfilment of happiness...[And]

happiness in life is predominantly sought in the enjoyment of beauty, wherever beauty presents itself to our senses and our judgement” (32-3). Freud goes on to say that we search for this enjoyment of beauty in “natural objects and landscapes” but also “the beauty of human forms” (33). As we saw earlier, Adam started with an enjoyment of beauty in the flowers that surrounded him as he fell asleep for the first time, moving then into a dream that showed him the beauty of his pastoral home. The happiness in “the beauty of human forms” is what Adam finds in Eve, and it causes him to forgo the earlier happiness he found in the landscapes of Paradise.

It is not until Adam’s recollection of his dream-like experience of Eve’s creation that we see his choice to follow Eve rather than God’s command, choosing to taste of the fruit and remain with Eve. After Adam demands a partner of equal intellect, the “Voice Divine” (8.436) says to Adam that he will create “Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self, / Thy wish, exactly to thy heart’s desire” (8.450-51). Already we begin to see a potential problem: Adam receives his wish for a companion who is his equal and shares his “likeness,” but also she is everything that he desires. If Adam is not careful, this will turn his devotion from God. Thus, the seed of uxoriousness has been planted, even before God fashions woman from Adam's rib, and already Adam's intention is clear: he desires a companion on whom he can devote all of his love. As a result, from the moment he was created, Adam has feelings and thoughts that make him susceptible to fall.

Adam's fancy, the imaginative images he receives for his reason to process, is activated when Eve is created, and he becomes much more conscious of the divine implications of choosing a companion over God. Adam says that after the Divine Voice spoke to him agreeing to his request for a companion, he

Dazzled and spent, sunk down, and sought repair

Of sleep, which instantly fell on me, called  
By nature as in aid, and closed mine eyes.  
Mine eyes he closed, but open left the cell  
Of fancy my internal sight, by which  
Abstract as in a trance methought I saw,  
Though sleeping, where I lay, and saw the shape  
Still glorious before whom awake I stood;  
Who stooping opened my left side, and took  
From thence a rib, with cordial spirits warm,  
And life-blood streaming fresh; wide was the wound,  
But suddenly flesh filled up and healed:  
The rib he formed and fashioned with his hands;  
Under his forming hands a creature grew,  
Man-like, but different sex, so lovely fair,  
That what seemed fair in all the world, seemed now  
Mean, or 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. (8.457-477)

Adam says that “Mine eyes he closed, but open left the cell /Of fancy my internal sight” (8.459-460) to show that he is experiencing something more than a dream: his mind is active and aware, and he is semi-conscious. This is similar to the way Eve’s dream portends reality in her actual

temptation with Satan by allowing her fancy to be activated, yet to also be aware of what is occurring. In both these instances, the experience is active rather than passive as it is more than simply receiving images—they actively use their reason to process what their fancy delivers to their mind. Adam watches his companion formed of his own “life-blood” to show that she will be as precious to him as his own life, an experience that costs him a rib, yet a wound that heals quickly and leads to Adam's experiencing “The spirit of love and amorous delight” (8.477). With Adam's first sight of Eve, he shows the potential dangers of love when one has a higher duty to a sovereign, to God. When Adam sees the “creature” created from his rib, he says she appeared

Man-like, but different sex, so lovely fair,  
That what seemed fair in all the world, seemed now  
Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained  
And in her looks, which from that time infused  
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before.... (8.471-75)

At once Adam sees her similarity to him and yet also her difference. He now believes everything he once thought fair, all the woods, streams, and valleys that he admired in his dream, to be “Mean, or in her summed up.” His world is Eve now. She is the most fair and the giver of sweetness into his heart “unfelt before.” In short, he has forgotten the awe he felt in the divine presence. As a result, after his recollection of this event, Adam shows his choice to unabashedly follow Eve rather than risk losing her, a choice begun shortly after he was created and long before the actual Fall.

Furthermore, we see that Adam's recollection of his waking reveals his tendency toward devotion to Eve over God. He describes the anxiety of his waking moments:

She disappeared, and left me dark, I waked  
To find her, or for ever deplore  
Her loss, and other pleasure all abjure:  
When out of hope, behold her, not far off,  
Such as I saw her in my dream, adorned  
With what all earth or heaven could bestow  
To make her amiable: on she came,  
Led by her heav'nly Maker, though unseen,  
And guided by his voice, nor uninformed  
Of nuptial sanctity and marriage rites:  
Grace was in all her steps, heav'n in her eye,  
In every gesture dignity and love. (8.478-489)

Dramatically, Adam chooses to renounce all pleasures if he cannot find Eve. Adam is now desperately aware of his one and only desire in Paradise: his companion. More than God, more than the joy of the pastoral seat of Eden, Adam finds happiness only in Eve. Adam, in an example of the poetic nature of speech before the Fall, says that "Grace was in all her steps, heav'n in her eye" (8.488) to show that he not only loves Eve at first sight, but he sees heaven in her eye, the only heaven he will ever desire. Adam says further that he could not keep from speaking his joy aloud. He recalls saying to God,

This turn hath made amends; thou has fulfilled  
Thy words, Creator bounteous and benign,  
Giver of all things fair, but fairest this  
Of all thy gifts, nor enviest. I now see

Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, my self  
Before me; woman is her name, of man  
Extracted; for this cause he shall forgo  
Father and mother, and to his wife adhere;  
And they shall be one flesh, one heart, one soul. (8.491-99)

Adam is so enamored of this woman that he would bind himself to a creature that shares *his* image. This shows a strong narcissistic tendency, similar to Eve's experience with her reflection, and a great display of pride. Adam finally ends his praise of the Creator by saying that in future generations, man will "forgo / Father and mother, and to his wife adhere" (8.497-99). While Adam says this prophetically, his declaration shows the true nature of his feelings. Adam knows no father or mother, only a creator, yet this creator is to him like the later human fathers would be as a model for the obedience one must have for God. Adam has already shown that he is not shy about arguing with God. Adam's pure emotion and free thought in this statement suggests that Adam is only thinking of having a life with this woman, leaving behind the relationship he has hitherto had with his creator, and forging his own path with Eve. This is not inherently sinful, but it shows that Adam is comfortable viewing Eve as the most important thing in his life. Adam might as well have added, "and they shall share one fate and one doom," for that is his thinking here. Adam believes their fate is tied together, like their flesh, heart, and soul. Thus, Adam's recollection of Eve's creation shows that his thinking makes him more susceptible to fall, and when the choice arises between obedience to God or disobedience with Eve, he will choose disobedience and will thus fall.

After recalling the statement he made to God, Adam concludes his tale to Raphael by showing he has chosen to be governed by passion and not reason as Raphael believes he should.

Adam admits to Raphael that he does not find as much enjoyment in all of the pleasures of Paradise as he does in his passion for Eve:

In all things else delight indeed, but such  
As used or not, works in the mind no change,  
Nor vehement desire, these delicacies  
I mean of taste, sight, smell, herbs, fruits, and flow'rs,  
Walks, and the melody of birds.... (8.524-28)

He is not moved by the beautiful pleasures God has provided in Paradise. He searches for something that creates in him “vehement desire” which he finds only in the passion of touch. He admits to Raphael that what the pleasantries of Paradise cannot provide for him, Eve can. Adam says,

... transported I behold,  
Transported touch; here passion first I felt,  
Commotion strange, in all enjoyments else  
Superior and unmoved, here only weak  
Against the charm of beauty's powerful glance. (8.529-533)

By admitting to Raphael that he believes passion to be superior to “all enjoyments else,” Adam shows that in his mind passion rules above reason: not a quality that angels, or Renaissance readers, would approve. Adam supposes Eve to be inferior in God's hierarchy, yet he also believes her to be

“...so absolute...  
And in herself complete, so well to know  
Her own, that what she wills to do or say,

Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;  
All higher knowledge in her presence falls  
Degraded, wisdom in discourse with her  
Loses discount'nanced, and like folly shows;  
Authority and reason on her wait,  
As one intended first, not after made  
Occasionally; and to consummate all,  
Greatness of mind and nobleness their seat  
Build in her loveliest, and create an awe  
About her, as a guard angelic placed.” (8.547-559)

In Adam's mind, Eve was meant to be the superior, intended to be created first, and he sees all wisdom bowing before her. If “Authority and reason” are qualities she possesses, Adam is not fulfilling his place in the supposed hierarchy, instead looking to Eve for guidance and leadership. Adam sees Eve as his god, ruler, and leader, believing all Eve says to be wisest and best. Adam describes Eve as “absolute” and “complete,” terms typically attributed to God, suggesting Eve is beyond a perfect human being, and that she is complete in her knowledge and would then not face the uncertainty of imperfect human knowledge. While Adam should be viewing her as an equal, instead he mentally prostrates himself before Eve, and he admits all of this to Raphael, proving that he has made his fall likely.

Raphael, the messenger of God, tries to dissuade Adam from his dangerous thoughts on Eve:

[T]he angel with contracted brow [said to Adam:]  
“Accuse not nature, she hath done her part;

Do thou but thine, and be not diffident  
Of wisdom, she deserts thee not, if thou  
Dismiss not her, when most thou need'st her nigh,  
By attributing overmuch to things  
Less excellent as thou thyself perceiv'st." (8.560-66)

Adam's words worry the angel and so Raphael admonishes him to keep Eve, and wisdom, by his side and not put confidence in "things / less excellent." Thus, Raphael shows Adam that he is not following the path of wisdom by placing Eve, and passion, as his god. True to God's command, Raphael has given Adam every possible warning, yet Adam seems to have made his choice and cannot be swayed.

Adam responds to Raphael's warning by holding firm to his choice to allow passion to govern his reason. Adam "half abashed" retorts,

"Neither her outside formed so fair, nor aught  
In procreation common to all kinds  
...So much delights me, as those graceful acts,  
Those thousand decencies that daily flow  
From all her words and actions, mixed with love  
And sweet compliance, which declare unfeigned  
Union of mind, or in us both one soul;  
Harmony to behold in wedded pair  
More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear." (8.595-606)

While Adam is "half abashed," listening, at least in part, to the remonstrance of the guiding angel, he is also half eager to convince the angel that he is in the right in his uxorious love of

Eve. Adam admits to Raphael that nothing delights him more than Eve and he goes on to claim a “Union of mind, or in us both one soul” that he says is “Harmony to behold in wedded pair / More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear.” This shows not only that Adam views Eve as worthy of his intellect with their “Union of mind”—a fact most scholars ignore—but also that he is conflicted between enjoying the mutual reason they both share, and enjoying her physical form in a way that diminishes her worth to existence only in her “outside formed so fair.” Even when he is discussing her intellect, he first begins with her physical form, as if these are intricately connected for him. Adam does not know whether one can physically enjoy one’s partner, and yet at the same time enjoy their intellect. Adam has the potential to move beyond his physical infatuation and this harmful mindset, yet he also shows his tendency to put Eve’s beauty before her intellect, both in speech and action. He seems to see her as a “thing” to possess, one of his flowers to keep him company while he dreams. C.S Lewis notices this tendency in Adam *after* the Fall:

Adam’s hedonistic calculus—his cool statement that he has never (except perhaps once) been so ripe for ‘play’ as now—strikes the right note. He would not have said that before he fell. Perhaps he would not have said ‘to enjoy thee’. Eve is becoming to him a *thing*. And she does not mind: all her dreams of godhead have come to that. (128)

But Lewis fails to notice this tendency in Adam *before* the Fall. In describing the dangers of love, Freud says that one “...[makes] himself dependent in a most dangerous way on...his chosen love-object” (56). This is true of Adam as well: he has the tendency to view Eve as a “thing” and as his “love-object,” showing he views Eve not as the equal he demanded of God, but rather something he is dependent upon for physical satisfaction. Freud ends his discourse on

love by saying, “For that reason the wise men of every age have warned us most emphatically against this way of life” (56). Raphael is the wise man in this situation and he is attempting to dissuade Adam from the dangerous way in which he views love, a mindset that is emphasized by the setting of the sun that ends Raphael’s visit, and ultimately Adam’s last innocent day in Paradise.

However, Raphael is not entirely like Freud’s “wise man” as he provides Adam with an improper example of how to treat Eve when he gazes on her beauty. The narrator tells us when Raphael first arrives that “[m]eanwhile at table Eve / Ministered naked.../ Then had the Sons of God excuse to have been / Enamored at that sight...” (5.443-48). From the start, Eve is on display. True, not as an object of desire as there is only “Love unlibidinous” (5.449) here, but yet still the emphasis is on her beauty and the pleasure she causes for the eye and not the intellect. Yet, despite this viewing by the angel, it becomes clear in Milton’s *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* that Milton sees love differently, as a partnership of intellectual equals, and when it is not so, then divorce is necessary. Milton speaks of the connection of equals as one of intellect before one of carnal enjoyment to show us how Adam should view his love of Eve. Milton says, “And indeed it is a greater blessing from God...and a higher end to honor and sanctify the league of marriage whenas the solace and satisfaction of the mind is regarded and provided for before the sensitive pleasing of the body” (366). When love and marriage is not appreciated as a compatible union of the minds of equals, but instead is only seen as a joining of bodies for physical enjoyment, we see the possible consequences. We see in Adam that he appreciates Milton’s ideal and that Eve is for him the perfect wife, yet Adam falls to worshipping Eve’s body, not her intellect, and that leads him to make allowances for anything she desires—even if it is a decision that is unwise.

Raphael leaves Adam, reminding him again that his thoughts are leading him on an improper path and that he has been warned, yet Adam is not in the state to listen: rather he is like a child that will defend his actions until they finally cause him to lose everything he enjoys.

Raphael leaves Adam with one final warning:

Be strong, live happy, and love, but first of all  
Him whom to love is to obey, and keep  
His great command; take heed lest passion sway  
Thy judgment to do aught, which else free will  
Would not admit; thine and of all thy sons  
The weal or woe in thee is placed; beware. (8.633-38)

Raphael goes on to remind Adam that "...to stand or fall / Free in thine own arbitrament it lies. / Perfect within, no outward aid require" (8.640-43), but the word that resonates at the end of this Book, the penultimate Book before the Fall, is the word "beware." Adam has been reprimanded and he has been warned that he is tempted to worship Eve over God and that he needs to love "...first of all/ Him whom to love is to obey" (8.633-34), emphasizing that currently Adam is not putting God first. As a subject, Adam should obey God and find this love easy. Instead, he allows passion to rule his actions, and as a result he makes allowances for Eve's actions, which ultimately allows her to renounce their companionship in favor of an equality she feels she lacks with Adam. After Raphael's ominous warning, Adam says farewell to the angel as if this were an ordinary day of discourse and not a dire warning of danger to come. Thus, Adam, like Eve, allows his temptations to make him more susceptible to fall, and even though he is warned by Raphael, he does not take seriously the warning to see that he must look to himself in order to overcome his problematic views of his love for Eve.

Significantly, Adam was given the warning Eve was never given, thus making Adam's fall appear more severe than most critics believe it to be. C.S Lewis says,

Adam fell by uxoriousness...His sin is, of course, intended to be a less ignoble sin than [Eve's]. Its half-nobility is, perhaps, emphasized by the fact that he does not argue about it. He is at that moment when a man's only answer to all that would restrain him is: 'I don't care'; that moment when we resolve to treat some lower or partial value as an absolute—loyalty to a party or a family, faith to a lover, the customs of good fellowship, the honour of our profession, or the claims of science. If the reader finds it hard to look upon Adam's actions as a sin at all, that is because he is not really granting Milton's premises. If conjugal love were the highest value in Adam's world, then of course his resolve would have been the correct one. But if there are things that have an even higher claim on a man, if the universe is imagined to be such that, when the pinch comes, a man ought to reject wife and mother and his own life also, then the case is altered, and then Adam can do no good to Eve...by becoming her accomplice. (126-27)

Lewis starts by taking the stance of a critic defending Adam's decision to fall as an act of nobility and love, then moves to show why this is an incorrect way to view Adam's choice. Adam's highest value should be love and obedience to God, his sovereign King, and yet Adam chooses something he has chosen ever since he had his vision of Eve: he chooses to forgo God because the thought of parting with Him does not cause Adam the same trepidation as contemplating a life without Eve, the new center of his world.

By looking at the mindsets of Adam and Eve, we begin to see the struggle inherent in choosing to remain obedient to God. One might be ready to argue that we cannot put ourselves, people of a postlapsarian world, too much in this prelapsarian Paradise. Yet, that is exactly what Frank Kermode argues we can do when he says, “The poem is absolutely contemporary, and its subject is human experience symbolized in this basic myth, and here made relevant in a manner not so different from that to which our century has accustomed us” (589). Therefore, we must see this epic as not only a tragedy that moves us with the style of the poem, but also as a means to understand that Adam and Eve embody the mental struggle between passion and reason that defines many of the greatest moments of our lives. This is a great step from some of the first criticism on *Paradise Lost* when Samuel Johnson says, “[*Paradise Lost*] admits no human manners till the Fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct” (485). Furthermore, “The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy” (487). As we look at both Adam and Eve’s dreams, we can begin to see that, on the contrary, Adam and Eve exhibit a humanity that many scholars fail to recognize in their conception of Adam and Eve’s perfect state. Scholars such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Stanley Fish, and Kermode disagree with Johnson’s harsh view of the poem. Fish focuses primarily on the reader’s experience in the poem, and Kermode, as we read, admits of the applicability of the poem to our own lives. Coleridge, not long after Johnson, starts setting this tone that Kermode and Fish continued, when he disagreed with Johnson, saying, “[I]nasmuch as [the poem] represents the origin of evil, and the combat of evil and good, it contains matter of deep interest to all mankind, as forming the basis of all religion, and the true occasion of all philosophy whatsoever” (496).

Many critics believe they have Adam and Eve figured out, and yet most neglect the wealth of material in the poem that shows that in dreams and recollections, Adam and Eve make choices and adopt mindsets that make their fall the likely outcome. Satan influenced these thoughts and mindsets, and yet ultimately Adam and Eve are responsible, as humans with imperfect knowledge, to know that the surest guide is obedience to God. If they choose to follow God before the temptations of their own thoughts and desires, then they can avoid disobeying God. Thus, we need to shift our focus away from Satan, and instead view the ways in which Adam and Eve are different from the way we typically try to read them. If we do this, we will see that Adam and Eve, like the angels, are perfect in the sense that they have reason and the ability to choose to obey God. They also have the choice to stand or fall, to adhere to their temptations or reject them, to remain perfect or become imperfect, and with this choice, despite imperfect knowledge, they show their humanity.

### The Fall Revisited in Proper Context

When we come to the Fall in Book IX, we see that both Adam and Eve follow their earlier temptations, showing that they are highly susceptible to the Fall after their dreams. Just as we start the poem with angels that chose to fall, we then move to humans who have the chance to avoid this error, but we see that their Fall is a result of adhering to their earlier decisions and mindsets. Stanley Fish argues that, “[Milton] gives us a plot without a middle—Adam and Eve fall spontaneously—but he allows for the *psychological* middle, a middle to the reading experience, by leaving it to us to discover that the narrative middle does not, indeed could not, exist” (531). Fish’s thesis is “provocative” as he himself notes (527), yet it helps us to redefine our view of the poem. We can agree with Fish that there is room for the psychological middle during this fall, but only inasmuch as this psychological experience for the reader exists because of shared intimacy with Adam and Eve through the recollection of dreams. But it is also clear that this narrative middle does exist and that it is the moment the whole poem is working toward and then away from after the Fall. Fish also argues that,

Adam is sufficient to his test without Raphael’s warning. Justice is being done to the reader, who is being given the opportunity [to show his or her own obedience to God by avoiding their own Fall]....[A]lthough what Adam will do in Book IX created the imperfection that makes it necessary for the reader to *now* have the opportunity. (531)

If we look at this another way, both Adam and Eve’s susceptibility to fall occurs long before in their dreams and recollections. Now, we as readers see the actual Fall and we can begin to see the process by which the parents of mankind made their fateful choice. Readers can see Adam and Eve differently to understand how they represent mankind in their susceptibility to

temptation over time, but also their ability to reject temptation at said moment, no matter how susceptible they have become. Fish also says, “At irregular intervals, phrases...are repeated (I am thinking especially of ‘sufficient to have stood, though free to fall’), and each repetition asks a silent question, ‘Do you understand *now*?’” (532). These phrases remind us that we can constantly evaluate how we, as well as the characters, change over the course of the poem. Fish also notes that, “...the episodes in which Satan appears are not important for any light they throw on *him*, or for the challenges they present to *him*, but for the function they serve as a whetstone to the reader’s laboring mind. Moreover the action of the poem is taking place in that mind, not in the narrative, whose world is static” (530). This may be a very good starting point for understanding Adam and Eve, but Fish pushes his ideas to the point that he devalues *Paradise Lost* as a whole. The events of the poem do matter and are a result of the tension between either giving in to temptation and failing the test, or remaining true to God. Adam and Eve make their own choices to fall, and this is emphasized by Milton repeating the same scenario Eve experienced before in her vision, now in reality. Satan appears in separate episodes with Eve: first in her vision, and then as the serpent during the actual temptation. Although his appearance has changed, he has not changed as a character. By contrast, Adam and Eve have changed dramatically. Their efforts to displace blame do not absolve them or cause Satan to bear additional guilt. Instead, by following Adam and Eve from their innocence, noticing their tendencies that make them more susceptible to fall, and finally seeing how they choose to fall, we can understand that the Fall does not occur suddenly, but is a result of the slow adherence to inner temptations over obedience to God.

Eve’s wish to leave Adam in Book IX shows a desire to recreate the scene from her vision. Whereas before she was reluctant to follow Satan in the eating of the fruit and

disobedience to God, after experiencing the supposed results of eating and soaring above the clouds, and after witnessing Raphael's attention to Adam as the superior, only taking note of Eve when she leaves and showing more of a sadness over the loss of her beauty than a loss of her conversation, we see that Eve has changed. She desires now more than just the equality she first knew from God when he appeared to her as a genderless voice, and now she seeks the power that Satan has offered. The only time she has experienced anything close to this type of equality is when she had her vision, but even then this equality was only achieved by rising above everything, becoming a sort of god. Eve says that if she is beset by Satan she can prove that she is not weak and can "double honor gain / From [Satan's] surmise proved false, [and] find peace within, / Favor from Heav'n" (9.332-34). Yet even here she betrays her true intention: she wants the honor and glory she experienced in her vision, and she wants the power she had. As Freud says when describing the destructive instinct of human nature, "But even where [the death instinct] emerges without any sexual purpose, in the blindest fury of destructiveness, we cannot fail to recognize that the satisfaction of the instinct is accompanied by an extraordinary high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, owing to its presenting the ego with a fulfilment of the latter's old wishes for omnipotence...[and] control over nature" (81). We see then that part of the fallen nature of mankind is bound up in a desire for omnipotence, for the complete power and knowledge of God, and with that, control to shape the world as one sees fit. Eve experienced a taste of this power and knowledge in her vision; she becomes truly the mother of all mankind when she experiences unhappiness with her situation and desires to change it by ascending beyond her placement in the garden among the flowers.

In Book IX, it becomes absolutely clear Eve wants to experience the results of her vision of eating the fruit; moreover she believes the results will be worth the risk and that the tasting of

the fruit, and disobedience to God, will not be severe. Let us revisit where Eve's vision ended to see the culmination of her desire. Eve says,

...[Satan] drew nigh, and to me held,  
Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part  
Which he had plucked; the pleasant savory smell  
So quickened appetite, that I, me thought,  
Could not but taste. Forthwith up to the clouds  
With him I flew, and underneath beheld  
The earth outstretched immense, a prospect wide  
And various: wond'ring at my flight and change  
To this high exaltation... (5.74-90)

In the vision, Eve awakens after she has soared above the clouds, but she has not actually eaten of the fruit. However, in her vision she did believe that she "[c]ould not but taste." Now she will taste. As Eve sees the object that has consumed her thoughts since the vision, she says,

'Here grows the cure of all, this fruit divine,  
Fair to the eye, inviting to the taste,  
Of virtue to make wise: what hinders then  
To reach, and feed at once both body and mind?'  
So saying, her rash hand in evil hour  
Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate:  
Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat  
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe,  
That all was lost. Back to the thicket slunk

The guilty serpent, and well might, for Eve  
Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else  
Regarded, such delight till then, as seemed,  
In fruit she never tasted, whether true  
Or fancied so, through expectation high  
Of knowledge, nor was Godhead from her thought.

Greedily she engorged without restraint.... (9.776-791)

Eve sees this fruit as a “cure of all” in two different ways: not only as a cure for flaws she sees in Paradise, but also as a cure for the misery she has endured wondering if she could recreate her vision by actually eating of this fruit. She finally has her chance, and as the earth shows the result of her great sin, Eve is oblivious to all, even to the serpent who guided her: the serpent was only a means to an end. He is forgotten, subsumed by her ecstasy of eating of the fruit.

We are also told “nor was Godhead from her thought.” Eve believes that the fruit will give her a state beyond equality where she can supplant Adam and become the one in control. She even considers not telling Adam of the supposed powers of the fruit, wondering if it were not better to “...keep the odds of knowledge in [her] power / without copartner? So to add what wants / In female sex, the more to draw his love, / And render [herself] more equal...” (9.820-23). This debate with herself shows the first poisons of the fruit and her experience with Satan: he has encouraged her to believe herself inferior to Adam and to view “female” as lesser than “male.” Yet, after her fall, Eve shows a desire to find equality with Adam, thus planting the seeds for redemption. Although it originally stems from a selfish motive, it points to an understanding of equality that will come with repentance. She says, “...I resolve, / Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe: / So dear I love him, that with him all deaths / I could endure,

without him live no life” (9.830-33). Eve also does not want Adam to find another Eve (9.911-13). These statements indicate that, although fallen, Eve still desires equality with Adam and does not wish to be parted from him. Whereas the vision led her to seek power and equality outside of Adam, now Eve looks again to her relationship with him as a possible source for companionship. Amidst the grime of this first sin, the gem of love is shown by this desire to be together and not separate, and this allows for redemption to later be possible when they decide together to repent of their disobedience.

When we come to Adam, we see that his choice to share his fate with Eve no matter the consequences causes him to fall. Adam should favor his love and obedience for God over his love for Eve. Although we find it easy to blame Eve for “tempting” Adam, we must remember that Adam neglected Eve and did not treat her as an intellectual partner as he treated Raphael; rather, he treated her like a pretty flower. Before he and Eve separate, Adam says,

‘...[B]est are all things as the will  
Of God ordained them, his creating hand  
Nothing imperfect or deficient left  
Of all that he created, much less man,  
Or aught that might his happy state secure,  
Secure from outward force; within himself  
The danger lies, yet lies within his power:  
Against his will he can receive no harm.’ (9.343-350)

God created mankind “...just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (3.98-99), and as Adam relates here, the only real danger to Adam and Eve is themselves. Both have had visions that have warned them of their weaknesses and where they are most vulnerable, yet both

ultimately ignore the warnings, allowing themselves to be susceptible to fall long before the actual event. Adam believes that, “The wife, where danger or dishonor lurks, / Safest and seemliest by her husband stays, / Who guards her, or with her the worst endures” (9.267-69). Here Adam, in the first intellectual discussion he has had with Eve, argues that he and his “wife” are strongest together, but he ultimately neglects to guard Eve as he believes a good husband should, and he erroneously assumes that Eve’s Fall would of necessity be connected to his own. However, Abdiel’s story demonstrates otherwise. Abdiel does not believe, like the other fallen angels, that because his leader Satan has chosen to fall that he must do the same. Adam is interpreting loyalty incorrectly by placing obedience to his wife above obedience to God. This occurs before the actual choice to fall and before Adam and Eve separate, and yet Adam’s choice is clear: he will follow Eve to whatever end.

Freud puts Adam’s situation perfectly when describing the psychological damage that can result from improper love. Freud states that a man cannot “make genital erotism the central point of his life...” because that would make him “dependent in a most dangerous way on a portion of the external world, namely, his chosen love-object, and [expose] himself to extreme suffering if he should be rejected by that object or should lose it through unfaithfulness or death” (56). In loving Eve by focusing primarily on her beauty and not fully grasping her intellectual equality, Adam makes Eve an object for his pleasure and something to be guarded, something he fears to lose, not an actual partner that he wants to remain with for their mutual benefit and the strength the union affords. He made himself susceptible to losing her, and all the more so because he put his desire to follow Eve above his desire to serve God.

Adam also posits the theory that temptations affect the person being tempted, thus showing he has neglected to see the internal turmoil that exists for Eve as a result of his treatment of her and her vision. While trying to comfort Eve after her vision, Adam states that,

Evil into the mind of god or man  
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave  
No spot or blame behind: which gives me hope  
That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream,  
Waking thou never wilt consent to do. (5.116-121)

This statement seems to negate the vision as a failed attempt by Satan to influence Eve. And yet in Book IX Adam refutes his own statement when he describes to Eve why he wishes her to remain by his side. Adam says,

For he who tempts, though in vain, at least asperses  
The tempted with dishonor foul, supposed  
Not incorruptible of faith, not proof  
Against temptation: thou thyself with scorn  
And anger wouldst resent the offered wrong,  
Though ineffectual found; misdeem not then,  
If such affront I labor to avert  
From thee alone, which on us both at once  
The enemy, though bold, will hardly dare.... (9.296-304)

Adam admits they are safest together, but his love for Eve will allow him to let her go. In addition, Adam now presents temptation itself in a different light: a failed temptation “at least asperses / The tempted with dishonor foul.” No longer is Adam saying that “Evil into the mind

of god or man / May come and go, so unapproved, and leave / No spot or blame behind.” Now Adam is saying that just the temptation itself will leave the tempted with spots of dishonor, showing that they are affected by the temptation. The Oxford English Dictionary provides the etymology of “asperses” thus: “Late 15th century (in the sense ‘spatter with liquid’): from Latin *aspers-* sprinkled, from the verb *aspergere*, from *ad-* to + *spargere* sprinkle.” The sense then of Adam’s statement is that temptation does leave behind a “spatter” or “spots” of dishonor, and as such, he admits that temptation leaves behind a mark on the individual. Adam thus implies that Eve’s vision affected her and left behind a stain. In order for her not to fall, she needs to reaffirm her obedience and not give in to her temptations. When Adam lets her go to work separately, it becomes plain that his own uxoriousness has left a stain on him. Thus, both Adam and Eve allow their temptations to guide them the rest of the way to the Fall and make Book IX “tragic” as Milton promised.

In the pivotal moment before his own Fall, Adam should have been able to tell Eve he could not follow her, relating that he loves her, but he must do the right thing and obey God, no matter the painful consequences. Instead he chooses to obey Eve, and thus he shows that his fear of losing his love-object outweighs his fear of losing God. When Eve relates what she has done, we see Adam lose everything in this single moment:

...Adam, soon as he heard  
The fatal trespass done by Eve, amazed,  
Astonied stood and blank, while horror chill  
Ran through his veins, and all his joints relaxed;  
From his slack hand the garland wreathed for Eve  
Down dropped, and all the faded roses shed:

Speechless he stood and pale, till thus at length

First to himself he inward silence broke. (9.888-895)

Adam is completely lost. He acts as though he has been abandoned by God Himself and as if he has lost his whole purpose in life. Rather than showing the firm confidence of Abdiel, Adam instead shows that all along he has viewed Eve as the center of his world, a pretty creature to adorn with roses and garlands, roses that are now faded like the beauty she once held for him in her innocence. For the first time he sees that Eve is a creature with reason, an equal to himself and capable of making choices, and his first reaction is not to speak to her, but instead to confer with himself, once again showing that he views Eve as an object. Despite having asked for and received from God an equal, Adam still sees himself as alone. In addition, his first words after the horror subsides are, "O fairest of creation, last and best / Of all God's works, creature in whom excelled / Whatever can to sight or thought be formed..." (9. 896-98). Adam betrays again his view of Eve: to him she is a pretty creature, the best formed of God's creations, but nowhere does he mention her intellect or her equality to him. Adam sees Eve as the best flower of all the flowers he surrounds himself with in Paradise. His rose has faded, and now, having earlier chosen Eve over God, he continues this choice and says, "...I with thee have fixed my lot" (9.952). Finally, "[Eve] gave him of that fair enticing fruit / With liberal hand: he scrupled not to eat / Against his better knowledge, not deceived, / But fondly overcome with female charm" (9.996-98). Adam eats, but instead of interpreting these lines as showing Eve to be the cause of Adam's fall, we need to instead remember that Adam "scrupled not to eat." He did not resist, because to him eating of the fruit was the only way to stay with Eve, and that is his main concern. Adam was "not deceived, / But

fondly overcome with female charm.” Rather than removing Adam’s guilt, these lines heighten it. Adam knowingly sinned because he was “overcome” by Eve’s beauty and had earlier chosen not to treat her as an equal like he should, but to treat her as a pretty object, a flower that he would rather fall with, even if faded, than lose.

Both Adam and Eve became more susceptible to fall in consequence of their visions, and thus the Fall in reality plays out. They could have withstood Satan as Abdiel did, but instead they allow their separate desires to draw them away from what could have been another act of Christian heroism. Milton’s poem begins with the fall of angels and continues to develop this motif. God is perfect, unquestionable, but the angels and humans he has created must constantly struggle between good and evil. Heroism is possible only when angels and humans conquer internal doubts and put trust in the perfect God and the community he has created. Heroism, in *Paradise Lost*, is synonymous with obedience.

## Conclusion

What can literature tell us that we do not already know? The ancients believed that literature must both teach and delight. In the age of short attention spans and decreased interest in the lengthy project, often epics are neglected in favor of pieces that require less sacrifice on the part of the reader. And yet we see that literature can still teach and delight as a fluid art form able to change with, and for, the reader. *Paradise Lost* is often taken as a religious epic that disparages Eve and only holds interest for the devout reader. While this text most certainly can draw the pious, the poem also speaks to the human condition and humanity as a whole. In a world of selfish intentions and greed, this poem reminds readers of the sacrifice and rewards of being a defender of truth. If we re-examine this poem and notice the liberal nature of both the author and the text itself, we begin to see that it is not a text to be used to uphold sexist notions and antiquated practices. No, this text is a model for the equality of all human beings. Adam and Eve both fall through disobedience, but more importantly they fall because they are focused on something other than God, who represents truth, goodness, and the equality of love. Adam and Eve focus so deeply on themselves and their individual desires that they forget the paradise they live in and the potential perfection of their marriage as a complementary union. God is a just ruler who allows Adam and Eve to govern themselves independently and freely. We see heroic Christianity in Abdiel who risks everything in order to remain true to goodness and morality. Adam and Eve have the same qualities and potential as Abdiel, but they allow themselves to be tempted internally in their visions, and thus they fall externally, in reality. Eve, in particular, is tempted by the sense of equality her vision provides, and Adam adds to the danger and susceptibility by not looking at Eve as an equal, but rather adoring her as he should adore God, and thus allowing the separation in Book IX that leads to the Fall. We have been

reading Adam and Eve incorrectly up until this point, and we cannot fully understand the poem until we fully understand the importance of Eve to the whole poem and how susceptible both Adam and Eve are to the Fall as a result of their mindsets. *Paradise Lost* shows us truly that “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heav’n of hell, a hell of heav’n” (1.254-55).

### **Note**

1. There are, of course, deviations from this pattern, such as Christopher Ricks, who focuses on appreciating Milton's style that he employs in the poem to use the multiple meanings that exist for any given word in the English language, both the common meaning and the Latin root meaning.

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