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Miami, Florida

FEASTS OF POWER:
HOW FOOD REVEALS EVE'S INFLUENTIAL ROLE IN
JOHN MILTON'S EPIC POEM,
PARADISE LOST

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

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by

Jeanne M. Ali

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To: Dean R. Bruce Dunlap
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Jeanne M. Ali, and entitled Feasts of Power: How Food Reveals Eve's Influential Role in John Milton's epic Poem, Paradise Lost, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Carmela P-McIntire

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Donald G. Watson, Major Professor

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This thesis of Jeanne M. Ali is approved.

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Florida International University, 2004

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

FEASTS OF POWER:

HOW FOOD REVEALS EVE'S INFLUENTIAL ROLE IN

JOHN MILTON'S EPIC POEM, PARADISE LOST

by

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Florida International University, 2004

Miami, Florida

Professor Donald G. Watson, Major Professor

This writing explores how food in Paradise Lost reflects Eve's power in the story of man's (and woman's) fall from grace. Critics often emphasize Adam in Paradise Lost; however, I challenge the notion of the first man as the most influential character of the poem. By examining Eve's role and her abilities with food, one sees the first woman as a well-rounded, complete being, albeit the first to succumb to temptation. Notwithstanding her transgression, - certainly no trivial act of disobedience – Eve should be viewed at least as Adam's equal, if not his superior. Her uncanny understanding of matters related to food points to skills Adam does not enjoy, and even Milton acknowledges Eve's importance in this arena. By studying the food in this epic, we see Eve sheds much light on all the other elements of Paradise Lost, and her personal strengths become obvious.

INTRODUCTION

In quoting Leigh Hunt, from “Eating Songs,” Denise Gigante writes:

It is not a little curious that ... the poet ... who has written with the greatest gusto on the subject of eating is Milton....And in Paradise Lost, Eve is not only described as being skilled in paradisiacal cookery (“tempting dulcet creams”), but the angel Raphael is invited to dinner, and helped by his entertainers to a series of tid-bits and contrasted relishes - Taste after taste, upheld with kindest change (introduction).

As suggested by the passage above, this writing deals with the role of food in Paradise Lost (PL), and, specifically, how the food in this poem reflects Eve’s power in the epic story of man’s (and woman’s) fall from grace. Milton’s Eve is a distinctly empowered woman, but one to whom little credit is given, as she traditionally must take the blame for the first sin. Although critics, as well as readers, often emphasize Adam in discussions about John Milton’s epic, PL, this work serves to challenge the notion of the first man as the most influential character of the poem. Through an examination of the role of Eve, and in particular her abilities with food, we see the first woman as a well rounded, complete being, albeit the first to succumb to temptation. Notwithstanding her transgression - certainly no trivial act of disobedience – Eve should be viewed at least as Adam’s equal in the story, if not his superior. Her uncanny understanding of matters related to food points to skills Adam does not enjoy, and Milton acknowledges Eve’s importance in this arena. By studying Eve’s various characteristics, we see that Milton chooses to grant his woman a vital role in PL, a role of strength, intelligence and power.

Because eating forms the basis for so many cultural, spiritual, and physical rituals, writers have included food in their works throughout history. One can read about incidents related to food in the earliest religious texts and the most modern secular ones, and there are food references in many of Milton's works, including some of his earlier poems. Milton's ode to his friend Charles Diodati, Epitaphium Damonis, which David Masson considers the "noblest of all his (Milton's) Latin poems," repeats the phrase, "Go home, unfed" (Masson, 323). This emphasis on a lack of food suggests that death robs the soul of nourishment (Hughes, 132). The third line of Lycidas, also a pastoral elegy, announces "I com to pluck your Berries harsh and crude," alluding to unripe fruit in connection with an untimely death. And Comus, written to honor the Earl of Bridgewater's appointment as Lord President (Governor) of Wales, is an integral part of a celebration that includes food, music and dance. Early in Comus there is a reference to travelers drinking sparkling liquor: "For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst" (67). Thus, we see Milton use food in various ways throughout his writings, yet nowhere more significantly than in PL, where food is not simply the vehicle of man's first fall, but also the metaphoric mirror of Eve.

Nothing written about food is more famous than the Bible's description of the temptation of Eve and Adam. A simple fruit – specifically unnamed, yet labeled "forbidden" – becomes the vehicle for the first human sin, and for centuries writers have dwelled upon Eve as the instigator of that transgression. John Milton's epic poem, Paradise Lost, is perhaps the best known of these works, and this thesis will attempt to challenge some of the conventional conjectures about Eve, particularly, that she should be viewed as somehow inferior to her male counterpart. This exploration of Eve's

abilities with food proves that she has an influential role in the poem, a position both of power and knowledge.

This writing will describe Eve and food through a concise analysis of the important sections of each book in PL that concentrate on her substantial contributions to the narrative. In fact, I propose that Eve, not Adam, is the stronger of the two humans in the story, and through Eve's connections to the food presented in the work we see the manifestation of her strengths.

This comprehensive study of PL shows that several of the books cover some aspect of Eve's superior nature. Milton credits the first woman with knowing how to plant, gather, and select food, as well as how to prepare it. One also reads that Eve prepares dinner for the angel Raphael, a pivotal point in the story.

One of the most dynamic elements in PL is the mutually dependent relationship between Eve and Adam; neither is complete without the other, and they share triumphs and tragedies alike throughout their ordeal. Although my thesis shows Eve as superior to Adam in matters related to food, much of what Milton writes about her reflects directly on Adam, so I also include the couple's reciprocal relationship and how Eve's skill with food aids them both.

To fully dispute the popular view of Eve as an inferior character, it is necessary not only to search for Eve's power within the poem, but also to comprehend the traditional manner in which critics treat her. Writings about Milton's Eve, particularly those by feminists, often neglect her superior qualities. Instead, these writers choose to see Eve as a secondary character, a subordinate to Adam. Additionally, many of these writers often refer to the strong male-weak female expectations that were the standard

during Milton's time. Pointing to the conventional patriarchal society as the basis of PL, these writers do not even attempt to look for a reversal of power within the main characters in the story. Included here are references to some of these criticisms of Eve, with particular emphasis on showing how, through a closer examination of the poem, these critics' theories can be countered.

As important as the critics' views of Eve are Milton's own views about women. His personal experiences, his education, and his relationships with other men and women, as well as his upbringing, influenced his writings. Producing PL in a time saturated with religious and political strife, Milton concentrated on themes he was obviously passionate about, often reflecting his own beliefs in those writings. PL is no different. Instead of merely relating the Biblical tale, he chose to include much of his own ideology throughout the poem.

Milton relies on food, the universally understood need of all living creatures, to formalize several lessons about the general weakness of humans and their need to remain true to God. Because Eve sins first – tasting the forbidden fruit – it can be argued that she, not Adam, becomes the focus of the poem, for without her sin there would not be a fall. This “fortunate fall,” a term referred to by writers and those who study the Bible, becomes the basis later for human redemption through the coming of Christ. Much is written about the fall as necessary, for it leads to Christ, and without the first sin there would not have been a need for Christ to appear on earth. However, this fall helps one view Eve as a major catalyst for this important spiritual event. In the book's passage relating the first sin – the ultimate transgression for which Eve is always blamed – we read that Eve is not solely responsible. Milton suggests that Adam has the choice not to

sin, although he follows Eve in tasting the forbidden fruit. Analysis of other passages points to similar situations in which Adam could take a more powerful stance against Eve's will. Instead, he chooses to go along with her, further indicating that the first man does not necessarily have complete control over his mate, nor does he wish to be separated from her, even if the result is the loss of their ideal lives in Paradise.

Milton does not restrict his use of food solely to show the power Eve has over Adam. The poet also indicates that Eve's attributes include wisdom, a keen understanding of the environment, and a respect for moderation and restraint. Through this comprehensive and detailed analysis of PL, one reads that Eve's ability with food additionally provides her with a general understanding of the domestic and social graces necessary to create a happy home. The many different aspects of Eve's strengths can be found in PL, and this writing explores several of them, not only within the poem, but also as written about by other critics.

Throughout PL Milton makes use of the word "taste," and the term's many meanings and implications most often refer to Eve. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "taste" in several manners, and, interestingly, most of those definitions apply to Eve. These descriptions include: a testing or trial, a judgment or mental perception of quality, a sense of what is harmonious or appropriate, and to have experience or knowledge, in addition to the (physical) sense of touch or feeling, to savor. Applying some of these words to Eve, it is clear she: (1) undergoes a test or trial while in Eden, although she does not pass God's test of obedience regarding the forbidden fruit, (2) uses her mental perception of quality when making food decisions, (3) senses what is harmonious in the natural world around her, (4) has experience, since everything in

Paradise is new to her, and (5) physically savors, or feels. Milton's reliance on "taste" indicates that he recognizes Eve has such qualities, and he deliberately includes the word throughout the poem to emphasize those qualities. To interpret taste as merely a physical function associated with eating neglects the deeper implications Milton imparts to the word, and, ultimately, to Eve. This "taste" refers sometimes to the woman's knowledge, as well as to her good judgment and instinct.

Although all of PL is infused with references to Eve and food, Book Five, which describes the dinner with the angel Raphael, best details Eve's strengths. Critics also point to Eve's status in Book Five, often writing about her superior role in the dinner passages. They suggest that Eve reinforces the ideas Raphael wishes to pass on to Adam. Raphael visits Eden to warn Adam of the temptation to which he and his woman may succumb, but Eve's abilities are what help to clarify the angel's teachings. By her understanding of the foods provided in Eden, Eve mirrors what Raphael wants Adam to learn. In this Eden, where even angels can eat, we see a strong parallel between food and knowledge, a parallel further exemplified by Eve's wisdom. Moreover, she, not Adam, understands this parallel. Because Eve can decipher the messages brought by Raphael, she further proves her understanding of God's wishes. All the scenes related to the dinner give readers an opportunity to view Eve's spiritual, as well as material, insights.

Because literary experts always include PL in the literary canon, much has been written about the symbolic and metaphoric meanings in the poem. Surprisingly, however, the direct relationship between Eve's powers and food does not appear very often. Therefore, I explore this concept as completely as possible, to prove that Eve's role in the story is not superficial, but indeed critical, and that the foods Milton writes about are

crucial to the development of the characters and plot of the story. Additionally, several critics have written about the multi-levels of taste in PL, and I will explore some of those writings, particularly the ones that deal directly with Eve's own personal tastes.

EVE AND FOOD IN PARADISE LOST

At the very beginning of Paradise Lost, Milton opens his poem by mentioning the fruit and “mortal taste” (1.2). But the actual “taste” of which he writes is not a mortal one, since no one immediately dies physically from this tasting. While PL does tell of the introduction of mortality into the world, the poet is alluding here to a spiritual death: Adam and Eve’s fall from grace. This fall is the single most important issue in this poem, and, because the catalyst through which the two humans fall is food, we see that food and taste are concepts Milton uses often.

In particular, Milton writes about Eve’s abilities with food and her skills in matters related to eating. When Denise Gigante writes about Milton’s use of the word “taste” as a metaphor she claims he mentions the word thirty times in Book Nine alone, and she further points out that other critics observe Milton’s “ruthless and relentless pressure on ‘taste’” (88).

Many writers have explored Milton's use of taste and the ramifications of the word as used throughout the poem. On a purely literal level, taste refers to what Adam and Eve actually eat, the flavors they experience from consuming the foods in Eden. Since Paradise is perfection, whatever the two eat there must be not only good for them, but must also taste good. By following God's edicts about food, whether consciously or through some natural selective process, Adam and Eve select what they eat in Paradise because those specific foods provide nourishment and are safe. For this same reason, they do not have to kill any other living creatures to sustain themselves. This creates the ideal situation, where humans eat only what they know is good for them, and they then enjoy everything that they eat. Applebaum equates this with the encompassing term

wholesomeness, whereby "in an ideal world, taste and wholesomeness would always coincide (222)." But Milton also refers to "mortal taste," a term that signifies much more than the mere consumption of food, especially since this term does not appear until after the fall, and is specifically initiated by the fall.

Raphael mentions the connection between mortal and spiritual taste early in the dinner passage, when he first speaks to Adam. The angel tells him that angels also have senses, "they hear, see, smell touch, taste," and then he explains they even "digest" what they eat (5.411). In continuing this passage, Raphael says these celestial beings (from) "corporeal to incorporeal turn," explaining to Adam that angels switch from almost human to heavenly form. What Adam must understand from these words is that angels have many of the same physiological characteristics he and Eve have, even though they are spiritual beings. Through these angels' ability to "taste," that is, to eat, they experience very human physical consequences, much like Adam. Not only do the angels eat, but they express love in a corporal fashion, also, much like the two humans. Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve are much like these angels, never experiencing illness or death, and Adam even questions Raphael, wanting know how the angels' existence could be better than what he and his woman have in Eden. It is not until after they sin that they begin to acquire non-angelic qualities. After the fall, Adam and Eve must deal with physically negative conditions, such as mortal deterioration and death, with which they were previously unfamiliar.

The mortal taste to which Milton refers is at the same time spiritual in nature, but one cannot automatically dismiss the physical ramifications of such taste. Indeed, there is physical taste in PL, as witnessed by the act of Eve, and later Adam, consuming the

forbidden fruit. Additionally, references to physical death are also included in the poem, most notably in Book Eight, when Raphael is speaking to Adam about the man's role in Paradise. The angel advises Adam not to concern himself with thoughts of heaven, thoughts of what it will be like when he dies and eventually arrives in Heaven, but to concentrate on his current life in Eden:

*Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;
Of other creatures, as him please best,
Wherever placed, let him dispose: joy thou
In what he gives to thee, this Paradise
And thy fair Eve; heav'n is for thee too high
To know what passes there; be lowly wise:
Think only what concerns thee and thy being,
Dream not of other worlds... (8.167).*

It is of great importance that Milton does not specify what the forbidden fruit is. He does not describe the fruit, but lets the reader's imagination make the decision, and, although he does call it an apple in the seduction scene prior to the fall, after the Fall Milton uses the word "apple" only in Satan's speeches. When Eve eats the forbidden fruit she does so because she believes it will give her powers; she imagines it will taste good because it will be good for her. In a very similar manner, Milton deliberately does not tell us how the fruit tastes, leaving that sensation up to the individual reader's imagination. This creates an enigma, for we are never really certain what the forbidden fruit tastes like. Had Milton specified what the fruit was, readers would have some

knowledge about its taste and texture, but the mystery remains. Only Adam and Eve have true knowledge about the fruit, for only they have tasted it. Thus, the connection between being in God's grace and food adds another dimension to the word "taste."

We can therefore assume Milton's use of food and taste is not simply for the purpose of recounting the story of the fall, but to make a strong statement about spiritual nourishment. Although not overtly didactic in nature, PL does teach a lesson about the weakness of humans and their need to remain true to God. In order to do this, Milton relies on food, the universally understood need of all living creatures. Because Eve sins first – "tasting" the forbidden fruit – it can be argued that she, not Adam, becomes the focus of the poem, for without her sin there would not be a fall. Unfortunately, the traditional view of Eve as a lesser being than Adam, a view supported by many writers throughout history, is also directly connected to her as the first sinner.

To fully dispute this popular view of Eve as an inferior character, it is necessary to comprehend the traditional manner in which critics treat her. Writings about Milton's Eve, particularly those by feminists, often include terms such as "defect/of Nature", "rebellious ally of Satan" and other similar pejoratives" (Halley, 661). These critics mention that Eve is subordinate to Adam, and view her character as less significant than his, pointing out that Milton wrote this way because it was the expected role of women at the time he wrote the poem. However, in seeing Eve as merely a product of Milton's misogyny, these critics cloud their ability to see beyond the limitations imposed by the times in which Milton wrote. During that religiously driven era, the belief was that women could not – indeed, should not – be anything but inferior to men, whether spiritually, morally, or physically. Those critics who complain about Eve as a lesser

character are not able to grasp the concept that Milton probably had little choice in depicting Eve as somewhat subservient to Adam. In fact, these critics dwell so much on the superficial depiction of the first woman that they miss her inward complexity. Gradually, however, critics have begun to question those labels, and counter-argue that Milton's Eve is exactly the opposite. These more enlightened scholars view Eve as a powerful creature with multiple talents and abilities, sometimes even beyond those of Adam. They thus allow themselves to see Milton's own hints at Eve's equal status in proclaiming Adam and Eve as "two great sexes" (8.151).

Therefore, to study Eve one must see behind the conventional façade and delve into her innermost strengths. This exploration of Eve's character cannot be accomplished from a merely superficial study of Milton's words, for the author's intent to portray her as less than Adam can be interpreted even in her own words:

...O thou for whom

And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh,

And without whom am to no end, my guide

And head, ... (4.440).

On one level, this passage - the first where we glimpse the powerful bond existing between Adam and Eve - seems to suggest Eve is indebted to her man. However, these lines may really be more indicative of Eve's understanding of their bond. She speaks to Adam not necessarily as a woman obliged, but as a woman who realizes the role her man plays in her world. Milton's Eve does not necessarily need Adam, but, rather, she is Adam, for without him she is not complete, and she recognizes their interdependent relationship. Adam feels the same way about Eve; she is just as important a part of him

also. This passage then serves as a precursor to later parts of the poem, particularly those where Eve shares her concerns with Adam, as when she relates her nightmare to him. If Eve were an inferior being, truly subservient to Adam, her concerns would be of no interest to him, or he might dismiss them as inconsequential. Instead, Adam attempts to reassure Eve when she is worried, his interest in her happiness a genuine reflection of his love for her as a worthwhile mate, not as a lesser being, and he specifically notes this when he calls her his "accomplished Eve" (4.660). Milton's Adam is a man who believes his mate to be a valuable complement to himself. As if to reinforce this concept, Milton relates how Adam, after reassuring Eve that her dream could not become reality because of her truly pure nature, "cheered he his fair spouse" and even kisses her tears, yet another affirmation of his trust in her (5.129).

Adam and Eve express appreciation for everything in Eden several times during the poem, but most notably during their morning hymn, as they sing about God's "glorious works," including the sun, moon, stars, hills, lakes, plants, fountains, and birds (5.153). Through this list they comment not only on the wonder of their maker's works, but they also ask the other creatures to praise God, to "Join voices all ye living souls" (5.197). Through this passage, we see that Adam and Eve have a knowledge about the gifts given them, and they realize it is their duty to make sure that neither one of them, nor any other creature, forgets to thank God for those gifts. Most importantly, this wisdom is not Adam's alone, for Eve is just as aware of her duties in Eden.

Eve's wisdom, often lost in the shadow of her surrender to temptation, does not escape the careful reader and critic. In fact, Ann Torday Gulden asserts that this wisdom forms a foundation for the peace and order of Paradise; a perfection she feels is due in

large part to Eve herself. Quoting Hannah More, Gulden writes of Eve as the “moving spring” of Eden, the main reason why things work as well as they do in their idyllic world. This Eve is a woman who knows how the many bounties she and Adam have been given function, and she uses her knowledge to make all those things work to their best advantage. Particularly, Eve’s wisdom can be seen throughout the passages related to Raphael’s visit, where we see her preparing the food. Although importance is often placed on Raphael’s discussion with Adam, it is the meal itself, and all the necessary preparations for the meal, that point to Eve’s uncanny, almost perfect, abilities.

Eve plans the meal with Raphael by first acknowledging that their feast will be a reflection of God’s bounties on earth. We read how Eve is intent on “hospitable thoughts” and she begins the task conscious of the need to serve a meal pleasing on many levels (5.332). She thinks about what foods will match, in what order they should be served and eaten, and even what foods will be the most elegant. With such careful attention to the meal, Eve is actually providing the reader with the breadth of her own knowledge. Although Milton does not explicitly explain Eve’s knowledge, we begin to realize she has a developed sense of taste, an instinct about matters of culinary importance and how those matters please God, for in delighting Raphael she will ultimately make God happy, too.

When Raphael first appears in Eden it is midday and hot. He appears to Adam, who mentions the heat and suggests they seek a shady place until the sun goes down. Once there, they meet Eve, who has been preparing the repast. This is significant because it reinforces the traditional domestic role of the woman as server. However, Raphael speaks to Eve as he enters, calling her the “mother of mankind” and declaring that her

"fruitful womb/ Shall fill the world more numerous with thy sons/ Than with these various fruits the trees of God/ Have heaped this table" (5.388). Thus, the angel does not treat Eve as a mere servant, but with complete respect and with the exact title that will later be given to Mary, whom Milton says is the "second Eve" (5.387).

The meal with Raphael spans many passages, but begins quite simply, with Eve selecting the menu. From the multitude of foods available in Paradise, Eve chooses greens, fruits, and even grapes to make the drink (5.344). These foods constitute a vegetarian meal, another indication of how Eve honors the environment and in no way harms other creatures. Because Adam and Eve are the highest beings in Eden, at the top of the earthly hierarchy, they do not need to harm the lower creatures. The two humans have dominion over the animals, but know it is not necessary to mistreat or harm them. They do not fear these animals, either, since the peaceful creatures in Paradise never attempt an attack. Not wishing to disturb these creatures, Adam and Eve look elsewhere for food and choose to eat plants and vegetables. Eve is completely confident in her choices and she knows the meal she selects will be pleasing to Raphael. Interestingly, Adam is the one who appears to doubt the meal is fit for Raphael. He even apologizes to the angel by saying that the food, although available from God himself, may be "unsavory" to spiritual natures (5.401). Raphael quickly corrects Adam and expounds on the importance of using what God has provided, something Eve apparently has already learned. This exchange becomes the first of several indicating that Eve's wisdom is superior to Adam's. Although this particular scene relates specifically to food, the underlying theme is much more universal, for it points to Eve as having a natural instinct Adam obviously lacks.

Gulden agrees with this concept of Eve's hidden instinct and goes even further, by suggesting that Eve's instinct serves to reinforce the ideas Raphael wishes to pass on to Adam. Since the angel has been sent to Eden to educate Adam – or, more specifically, to warn him of the temptation to which he and his woman may succumb – Eve's abilities facilitate an understanding of Raphael. By her understanding of what God has provided in Eden, Eve mirrors what Raphael wants Adam to learn: Moderation will be the key to unending happiness in Paradise and all of God's creations need sustenance and are interdependent. In this Eden, where even angels eat, we see a strong parallel between food and knowledge, a parallel further exemplified by Eve's wisdom since she, not Adam, understands this parallel.

Raphael makes it clear that Adam has dominion over these other creatures, but also that he must use them wisely. The angel tells Adam that the fruit, like all of Paradise, is "Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed/ To vital spirits aspire, to animal,/ To intellectual, give both life and sense" (5.483). In continuing this speech, Raphael even warns Adam not to question the food God has provided, stating "Wonder not then, what God for you saw good/...but convert, as you,/ To proper substance" (5.491).

During Raphael's visit, Adam questions the angel about how "by steps we may ascend to God," the important scale that leads to heaven (5.512). This progression, both physical and spiritual, is an important concept that mirrors the religious beliefs of Milton's day, specifically the belief in the scale of nature.

The scale of nature, often depicted as a ladder or set of stairs, forms a chain, from low to high. Presumably, perfection – and, thus, salvation – is at the topmost of this scale. Incorporating evolution, this scale also allows for a progression of creatures, from the

lowest to the highest. The highest being, God, sits alone at the very top of this scale, but man, formed in his image, comes as close to him as is possible. As Scott Elledge reminds us in his critical edition of PL, Milton claims "what distinguishes men from other animals is that men stand up straight (and can thereby look up toward heaven)," one of the central themes of PL (465). Since man can reason, this places him above other creatures, and is one of the reasons that man is placed above the other creatures on the scale. The spiritual nature of this scale allows man to work towards heaven, from lowly sinner to holy, forgiven spirit, always closer to God.

Through hard work and constant devotion, man can aspire to reach heaven by climbing the scale, in complete contrast to the pre-destination theory that only those already chosen by God may enter his kingdom. Raphael's response is to tell Adam not to worry because he has been made "perfect," but that, even so, he must remain obedient and follow God's rules (5.524).

Adam's perfection – and Eve's supposed perfection also – challenges religion on many levels. If these two humans are indeed perfect, then there isn't much they need do to get into heaven; if they just remain as they are, they will be guaranteed entry into heaven. However, if they must work their way into heaven, then they may be close to, but not exactly, perfect. Additionally, if God already knows (and has chosen) who will be allowed into Heaven, then perfection is not a necessity, since fate has already been set. Such contrasting ideas constitute one of Milton's writing ploys, for in presenting two differing views, he stimulates his readers, and, as he has so many times before, he presents a situation perfect for argument and intellectual discussion.

As Raphael continues to explain to Adam how life is supposed to function, how everything created by God requires some sort of nourishment, he speaks about much more than food. He says, “For know, whatever was created, needs/ To be sustained and fed” (5.414). The angel then lists the various elements, explaining their reliance on each other, including earth and sea, air and fires. But these relationships are more than physical, for Raphael is hinting at the need for knowledge. In showing Adam how all of God’s other elements and creatures need nourishment, he is also saying that man (and woman) need to be spiritually fed. Thus the angel actually explains to Adam that the efficiency of God’s creations (including the two humans) is a spiritual sign of perfection. However, this can also be seen as a warning to Adam, for Raphael is indirectly telling him that the lack of spiritual nourishment associated with sin is against God’s will. Through the use of food as a metaphor for spiritual wisdom, he is advising Adam not to transgress, lest man become spiritually hungry.

Food and knowledge are often combined in written works, on numerous levels, leading readers to establish a connection between these two words. Theologians also see a strong link between these words, probably first observed in discussions about “the tree of the fruit of knowledge.” Not surprisingly then, critics claim this connection as a strong element in PL. Christopher Ricks writes, “The word (*sapere*) is important to Milton because it links knowledge and the fruit” (Gulden, 3). And Carol Myers goes even further when she suggests “the verb ‘to eat’ as being perhaps the most prominent theme word in the Eden tale” (Gulden, 3). Therefore, when Eve displays her ability with matters of food and eating, what we actually get is evidence of her knowledge about life, God, and most specifically, about her role in Eden.

Eve's role in PL has often been viewed as one of temptress, since it is she who gives Adam the forbidden fruit to eat. However, one must study Eve's motivations, not merely condemn her for falling to temptation, and one cannot ignore the fact that, throughout the story, Adam and Eve are so completely enamored of each other they seem to form two halves of one whole. This interdependence, whereby each is completely devoted to the other, forms the basis for their relationship, for neither one seems to be able to exist without the other. For example, in Book Five, when Eve tells Adam of her nightmare, she says, "O sole in whom my thoughts find all repose,/ My glory, my perfection" (5.28). Adam's response begins with the words, "Best image of myself and dearer half" (5.95). Clearly, Eve and Adam both see themselves as incomplete alone, but each as whole because of the other. This marriage, a true and pure union between woman and man, further adds to the belief that Eve is indeed Adam's equal, for he feels about her the same way she does about him. Therefore, neither is inferior, at least not in each other's eyes, and they respect each other as equals.

This equality is spiritual in nature, but we read also of the physical differences between the first two humans, differences that do not even escape the careful eye of Satan. At his first sight of Adam and Eve, the devil is in awe of them, jealous of these two perfect creatures whom he realizes are physically different from one another. Satan says there are numerous creatures in Paradise, but he marvels at Adam and Eve:

*Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
God-like erect, with native honor clad
In naked majesty seemed lords of all,
...Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;*

For contemplation he and valor formed,

For softness she and sweet attractive grace (4.288).

This passage also provides a glimpse into the complex roles of Adam and Eve, for we see that Adam is "for God only" and Eve is "for God in him [Adam]" (4.299). On a superficial reading, the meaning is that Adam is God's preferred one, and Eve is there merely for Adam. However, one can also interpret these lines as indicative of Eve's more complex nature, since she is not there simply to please ("for") God directly, but through Adam. The implication is that Eve's role is much more demanding, because she must please her maker through her man. What we can deduce from this is that the first woman has been granted a daunting task, one with which Adam does not even have to deal. We are never specifically told exactly why this burden falls upon Eve, and not on Adam, but one can speculate that perhaps Eve is simply the stronger of the species, and, therefore, the only one capable of such a responsibility.

When Adam and Eve pray before beginning their daily work, God hears their prayers and is apprehensive they will fall to Satan's temptation. It is important to note during this passage that God is not concerned about Eve alone; he is just as worried about Adam, and tells his angel:

...thou hear'st what stir on earth

...and how disturbed

This night the human pair, How he (Satan) designs

In them at once to ruin all mankind (5.224).

These insightful words indicate God himself worries that the blame for the fall will be on both humans, not just on Eve. So he asks Raphael to go to Eden and speak to

Adam, not even mentioning Eve. After this passage we read of Raphael's journey to Eden, and, not surprisingly, Eve is preparing their dinner. Again, we glimpse Eve's ability with food at a crucial moment of the story! It is at this point that Eve – not Adam – realizes the food they have is insufficient for Raphael and she sets off to seek more suitable food. Indicative of Eve's keen sense of propriety and, again, her abilities in matters of food and home, we can see Adam basically has no clue that what they are about to eat may not suffice for such a holy guest, and it remains Eve's decision alone to get more appropriate foods.

We must assume the choices of food in Eden are many, since this is, after all, the perfect place, and all manner of living beings exist in Eden. But Milton's Paradise does not allow violence of any kind. Since there can be no death and no killing of animals, even for nourishment, Adam and Eve are thus vegetarians, as are all the other creatures that dwell in their perfect world. They seek fruits, berries, and greens, but must work for their food, as nothing in Eden is simply there for the taking. In his article about the implications of "eco-Eden," Nick Pici carefully explores Adam and Eve's food choices, and sees their vegetarianism as symbolic of the greater concept of man's need to care for the environment. Pici argues that, by their vegetarian choices, Adam and Eve are in essence the very first environmentalists, the first humans living in harmony with nature.

This ability to blend in with nature, as opposed to spoiling what nature has provided, is an integral part of all pastoral writings. Indeed, pastorals rely heavily on nature, without which the genre would not exist. Since PL is, at its core, a pastoral poem, Milton respects the genre by including such elements in Paradise also. In an early description of Eden, Milton writes of:

A happy rural seat of various view;

Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm,

...Betwixt them lawns...and flocks

Grazing the tender herb (4.247).

The author includes not only the flora and fauna of traditional pastorals, but the creatures also, which are crucial to writings about nature.

Adam and Eve coexist with, and even respect, the various creatures as easily as they do the trees and flowers in Eden. That Milton included these animals adds to the pastoral effect of the work, and provides for the later introduction of Satan, who comes into their idyllic world disguised as one of those creatures. Even though Adam and Eve will eventually be tempted by Satan, before then they are content to live with what nature provides, and they learn to use those provisions in a most unobtrusive method.

Even the pair's gardening methods in Eden indicate a respectful attitude towards nature and a reflection of moderation. As Pici notes, "(Adam and Eve) take from the Garden only what they need, only the bare necessities of fruit and drink; they are conscientious and careful not to put undue stresses on the land..." (Pici, 7). Although Adam is included in Pici's writing, we see it is Eve, not Adam, making the important food choices, and she seems to be the one with the firmer grasp on the idea of treating nature carefully, even though Adam is aware that they have to care for their surroundings. He even mentions their "delightful task/ To prune these growing plants, and tend these flow'rs,/ Which were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet" (4.437). Referring to their "toil," the hard labor of working in the fields, Adam realizes that without Eve work would be unbearable; Eve makes his work easy and this pleases the man.

Although Eve does seem to have a natural sense about which foods to select and how to prepare them, one cannot separate Milton's own views about women in analyzing his female protagonist. One can speculate that, brought up in a society dominated by men, the author gave Eve many female characteristics which mirrored the standard for his times. Since the traditional domestic role was preferred when PL was written, it is no surprise that Eve exhibits the traits of the idealized housewife. In essence, Eve keeps house for herself and Adam, and in a manner so perfect that she has no doubts at all that what she does, and even how she does it, is correct. However, while she is so adept at everything domestic, she never shows a weakness in any other areas. This woman does a great job selecting and preparing food, but at the same time there is no indication that she has trouble with anything outside her routine womanly duties. Her domestic role is thus just an added dimension to what appears to be her complete perfection.

Eve's instinctive knowledge about food reflects her general knowledge about life, and this creates an obvious paradox, because she is not the one chosen by God to learn about life. Milton's Raphael teaches Adam, not Eve, what these humans do not know, and yet the angel does not reveal all to him. Instead, Raphael hints that some things are best left unlearned, that perhaps Adam is incapable of understanding all there is to life.

As a method of accommodating his message to Adam's limited human understanding, Raphael decides to use the physical to explain the spiritual, "By lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms" (5.573). In much the same way, Milton uses food throughout PL as a metaphor for the spiritual. Since both the author and the angel rely on food references to make statements about the human spirit, we see that these passages often refer to more than one kind of nutrition.

In his discussion, the angel states, "Enough is left besides to search and know,/ But knowledge is as food, and needs no less/ Her temperance over appetite" (7.125). Here Raphael is letting Adam know there is much more to learn, but that God cannot share all of life's secrets. More importantly, he is saying man must practice restraint in many areas, much as he must practice moderation with food.

A direct allusion to temptation, as well as moderation, this passage is quite interesting since Eve is not privy to this conversation. If God indeed is omnipotent, then why does he not include Eve in this forewarning, since he must know she will fall to temptation? Perhaps the explanation can be found not in God's decisions, but in Adam's actions. For, if Adam is truly the superior of the two human beings, then it is his responsibility to make certain his mate does not succumb to Satan, and he is given plenty of notification that such a fall can occur. However, Adam does little to save Eve from temptation, or even stop her from committing the first sin. Earlier, when Eve tells Adam of her nightmare, Adam reassures her, explaining that she could not sin because someone as pure as she is incapable of sinning against God. Additionally, when she wishes to separate in the garden, Adam is not insistent enough to make her stay with him, allowing Satan the opportunity to be alone with Eve. When Eve is faced with Satan, Adam's reassurances are forgotten. At that crucial moment, he is incapable of ultimately swaying her from evil. Adam must therefore be weak in his hold over Eve, for his efforts to keep her free of sin are only vain ones, at best, an indication he is surely not superior to her.

Through Adam's inability to control Eve's actions, Milton may also be extolling the idea of man's (and woman's) inherent ability to choose: Free will. This concept of free will appears several times in PL, and its reoccurrence is understandable because Milton

believed in the idea. Since the poet was adamantly opposed to the Calvinist teachings of pre-destination, he took every opportunity to dispute the theory that men (or women) have no ultimate choice in their fate. Instead, he wrote that people were responsible to select their own destinies. In Book Three of PL, God speaks about free will when he tells his Son that he is aware of what Adam (and Eve) will do. Foretelling the transgression, God says of his first human creation:

*He and his faithless progeny: whose fault?
Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me
All he could have; I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall (3.96).*

This passage indicates that God knows what will happen – after all, he is God! – yet he will not intervene on behalf of Adam (or Eve). By not interfering, God allows the couple to make their own decision when tempted by the devil, even if that decision is the mistake that will forever damn them and their offspring. This seems on the surface a dichotomy; a loving and understanding God allows the first sin to occur, although he has the power to stop it. However, PL must reflect its author's ideas, while not altering scripture, so Milton's God knows that Adam and Eve will sin, but leaves the choice up to them, as does the Bible. With such emphasis on free will, Milton maintains the integrity of the Bible, while making a statement about his own belief.

Milton decides that his Adam will not have complete control of Eve, since such control would be contrary to her ability to freely choose her own destiny. Instead, his woman will make her own choices, good or bad, and Adam is spared the additional guilt of having led her astray. By granting her free will, or at least by not allowing Adam to

influence her choices, Milton gives us an Eve that eventually sins of her own accord. This is in complete contrast to the other times when Adam and Eve show such self-discipline that they refrain from making any bad choices at all, and instead, show complete moderation in everything they do.

In addition to moderation, Adam and Eve practice self-restraint, which critics often see as directly related to classical ideals and values associated with discipline. In writing about this connection, Joshua Scodel believes PL is indicative of much more than mere traditional values; he sees the discipline in the poem as one of “pleasurable restraint.” Using several references to food, Scodel writes that Adam and Eve’s work in the garden – particularly work related to gathering food – is followed by rest, a display of the couple’s “virtuous and pleasing moderation.” He also states, “Adam and Eve’s daily alternations between labor and rest exemplify their general pattern of Edenic pleasure.” One can argue that such pleasure is dependent on self-restraint, for without the latter the former would simply be excess. And, although Eden is perfect, it is also a place where work is necessary, where all that God provides to Adam and Eve is not without obligation, since they must work, particularly for their food. Following this concept, then Eve is definitely the one who practices the most self-control and restraint, for it is up to her to make the vital food choices in preparing for Raphael’s meal.

Aside from Eve’s having to select the meal, we also read that she serves it to the angelic guest, an action critics, particularly feminist critics, see as a reflection of Milton’s own misogynistic views. Additionally, this act of service may also be seen as Milton’s way of perpetuating the traditional role of women. During the author’s time it was expected that women serve the meal, and, specifically, serve the men, so having Eve feed

the angel would be a natural extension of this role. However, Eve's serving of the dinner may also have a more spiritual explanation. Remembering that Jesus's first miracle took place during a wedding feast – when he turned water into wine - we see serving food (or drinks) does not have to be a burdensome chore (John 2:1-11). In fact, providing nourishment is almost always seen as commendable, and Eve has the pleasure of feeding the highest of heavenly beings. Seen in this light, her serving of the meal takes on a divine aura, and she expresses hospitality to her guest in much the same way that Jesus did at the wedding. This dinner can be regarded as a religious ritual, much like a communion, and in much the same way that Jesus's first miracle revolved around food, so does Adam and Eve's first encounter with a heavenly body.

The religious implications of this dinner do not escape Milton, who expresses the same idea through his words. The poet describes Eve during that moment as “innocence deserving paradise” and Raphael exclaims, “Then had the Sons of God excuse to have been/ Enamored at that sight” (5.445). If Eve, naked and serving food to her husband and her houseguest, can arouse such beauty in the eyes of an angel, then her work is not unrewarded, and she is certainly not being exploited by either man.

Adam's discussion with the Angel Raphael continues from Book Five, through Book Six, and into Book Eight, where Eve's role is small, but very significant. In this book, the angel has concluded his talk, but Adam is so mesmerized that he pleads for more. Adam convinces Raphael to continue, claiming he has doubts about the nature of the world, and, specifically, matters concerning the earth. Upon Adam's supplication, Raphael begins to tell of the heavenly bodies. Suddenly, Eve does something quite interesting – she leaves. Eve has been listening, and understands the conversation

between Adam and Raphael, but she decides to leave and go tend to her garden, to go "forth among her fruits and flow'rs" (8.44). Eve leaves, not because she is unable to comprehend this complex and technical explanation of the universe, but simply because at this point she decides that she would prefer to hear the conversation from Adam:

Yet went she not as not with such discourse

Delighted, or not capable her ear

Of what was high: ...

Her husband the relater she preferred

Before the angel...

...he, she knew would intermix

Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute

With conjugal caresses, from his lip

Not words alone pleased her (8.48).

The importance of this passage cannot be understated, for it sheds much light on Eve. Through it, we see that she is as capable as Adam of comprehending such complicated matters. However, she prefers to hear these matters from Adam because she wishes to be his "sole auditress" (8.51). Eve wants to hear Adam tell her when they are alone, and when they debate these important issues, they may resolve them "with conjugal caresses" (8.56). From these few words in this passage, we learn that Eve is not only just as smart as Adam, but that she even debates him on important matters. Since she is contemplating an intelligent debate with Adam, we can assume she knows her intellectual abilities are as strong as her man's. Even if she thinks that making love will help resolve any difference of opinion they may have, the fact that she is entertaining

such differences of opinion is significant. This tells us that Eve is certainly not the meeker of the two sexes, that she has her own opinions, independent from Adam's, and that she is certainly capable of holding her own against her man.

As the story grows closer to the fall from grace, we see a struggle for power between Adam and Eve, albeit a loving struggle. Eve tells her mate their work in the garden never ends because they are together during their labor and they interrupt their tasks with conversation. She then suggests they separate their chores, specifying that he can go wherever he wishes, while she will go where she can work best. Thus, she is aware of her talents in this type of work, which is directly related to food gathering, yet she does not acknowledge any such talent on Adam's part. Adam's concern is the possibility of temptation – he reminds her they have been warned of this – and he prefers that they continue to work together, but Eve is adamant. She tells him she is well aware of the warnings concerning an enemy, but she insists that she cannot be tempted, and she is even surprised that Adam would even think her capable of succumbing to temptation.

It is important to note that she, not Adam, makes the suggestion to separate. If Adam had made the suggestion, the outcome would have been different, for, by her decision, Eve sets herself up for temptation. At this point, Adam is not comfortable with her proposition, but he is not strong enough to convince her otherwise. He tells Eve of the dangers they could face, but she still insists they separate, and Adam acquiesces:

Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more;

Go in thy native innocence, rely

On what thou hast of virtue, summon all,

For God towards thee hath done his part, do thine (9.372).

This powerful dialogue provides a look into this relationship of love, while giving us an opportunity to see how much Adam respects Eve. He is telling her that evil awaits them upon separation, but, at the same time, he is expressing his faith in her. Adam knows his mate is innocent, but he trusts her virtue can overcome that same naiveté. Above all, Adam does not want Eve to feel she is not free, and his respect for her does not allow him to be comfortable keeping her where she does not want to be. Eve also respects Adam, and she acknowledges there may be danger, but she truly believes they will overcome any such obstacle. Giving in to her, Adam makes the ultimate sacrifice, for as soon as Eve is alone Satan sees his opportunity to convince her to fall.

Many people condense the fall to Milton's four simple words, "she plucked, she ate" (9.781). That this fall, the most important in the history of mankind, should focus on food is not surprising, since no other element in Eden would have as great an impact as food, and in particular, fruit. From the very beginning of this poem, fruits and foods of all kinds form the basis for much of Adam and Eve's interaction in the garden: They gather food, they share food with Raphael, they even separate to gather their food more efficiently. Therefore, when Eve gives in to temptation, food is once again at the forefront. Eve's fall has to include some element familiar to us all, and food is the universal nourishment with which everyone is familiar. We can almost understand why Eve falls prey to Satan, as we have all experienced food temptations, and, therefore, her lapse in judgment is one we understand. Milton's Eve, particularly strong of beauty and character, is also very human, and we can easily sympathize with her.

Eve is tempted not only by the forbidden fruit itself, but also by all that it encompasses. She imagines that Satan, the serpent, has powers beyond her own, and she

begins to believe that the secret to those powers is in the fruit. Eve knows that the Tree of Knowledge is forbidden, but through the devil's deceitful ways she begins to think that she is somehow entitled to the knowledge that the fruit imparts. Her reasoning is simple: If the serpent can speak and have such knowledge and reason from eating the fruit, then so can she. As if to emphasize this point, she even questions why "This fair fruit/... This intellectual food, (is) for beasts reserved?" (9.763). She further questions why only the serpent may eat of the fruit, and finally decides that she, too, would benefit from its special powers. In exploring this passage, many point to vanity as one of Eve's reasons for eating the fruit, and Satan definitely uses her ego against her. However, Eve is only vain because the serpent plants that idea in her mind. It is significant to note that prior to this scene the woman shows no narcissism and seems genuinely unaware of her beauty.

Another important passage where Eve is sometimes considered vain is in Book Four, when she tells Adam about the first time she saw her own face, reflected in the water. Often cited as the most blatant evidence of Eve's narcissism, this passage details the woman's wonder at this new experience:

*As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A shape within the wat'ry gleam appeared
Bending to look on me, I started back,
It started back, but pleased I soon returned,
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love (4.460).*

Not aware that it is her own reflection, she gazes at the image and is awed by its beauty, a scene that is often interpreted as an allusion to Eve's vanity. However, what she

experienced at that time was not vanity, but mere curiosity. Since Adam and Eve are the only human beings in Eden, they have no other persons with which to compare each other, much less themselves. It is easy to comprehend that Eve, upon seeing her own, perfect female form, was fascinated by the vision before her. But this fascination has no connection to vanity, for she was simply reacting to a new experience. When she abandons her image to go with Adam she realizes "How beauty is excelled by manly grace/ And wisdom, which alone is truly fair," an indication that she sees beauty not only in her man but also in his wisdom (4.490). Unfortunately, many critics use this reflection passage as an example of Eve's inherent flaws, preferring to see it as indicative of an imperfection in her character. However, instead of seeing this passage as one that points to narcissism, readers should understand that Eve's reaction to her reflected face was quite natural. This passage actually depicts Eve as innocent and curious, traits that should not be considered negative. It is only after her sin, after Satan lures her into disobeying God, that she begins to exhibit truly undesirable traits.

When Eve finally eats from the forbidden tree, she loses her self-control and overindulges. Milton tells us "Greedily she engorged without restraint" and she seems as if drunk with the effects of what she has eaten (9.791). In her overindulgence, Eve actually gives up her sense of moderation, and thus begins the decline of her innocence. One of the first thoughts she has now is whether to tell Adam she has found true knowledge – or what she believes to be true knowledge – from the fruit-bearing tree. She ponders the possibility of keeping her secret, which may "render me (her) more equal, and perhaps,/ A thing not undesirable,/ sometime/ Superior; for inferior who is free?" (9.823). But she quickly changes her mind when she realizes her love for Adam is still

strong. Eve decides to share the fruit with Adam, even if it dooms them both. But love for Adam is not Eve's sole motivation, for she is also acting out of selfishness and jealousy. If she does not tempt Adam, then she alone has dared to disobey God, and she must avoid this at all costs. Because of her love for Adam, she wants to make sure that, having neglected her duty to God, she does not find herself alone and separated from her mate. Therefore, Satan has conquered Eve on only one level, for he cannot completely erase her feelings for Adam. His temptation of Eve, as serious as it is, never separates the two people completely, even when they begin to blame each other for their disgrace and to feel ashamed of their disobedience against God's edict.

Although both humans disobey God, it is Adam's sin that merits closer investigation. Eve succumbs to Satan because he is conniving: He tells her that eating the forbidden fruit will not harm her and she will gain greater knowledge when she eats it. She then decides to break God's rule because Satan's deception has been successful and he has managed to trick her into believing she will benefit by doing so. When Adam hears of Eve's sin he is shocked, "horror chill/Ran through his veins," realizing that what Eve has done is very wrong (9.890). However, this does not stop him from sinning along with his woman.

Adam's reason for eating the fruit Eve offers him is quite different from hers; he sins only because of his love for Eve. Eve tells Adam the fruit will not kill them, that it will enhance their knowledge. She is not deliberately tricking him, as Satan did to her, but merely letting Adam know that what they previously thought about the fruit was not true. She tells him the fruit gave her "dilated spirits, . . . ampler heart" and she encourages him to eat so they will enjoy "equal joy, as equal love" (9.876). The only deception Eve

employs is to tell Adam she was seeking the forbidden fruit, and its marvelous effect, for him. She says this because she knows her man's weak point: What she does for him he will not ignore. Adam has the ability to not sin, the free will to make the correct decision and prevent himself from committing this terrible act, but his love for Eve is stronger than his sense of what is appropriate. When Adam joins her in eating the fruit, love is his only motivation for he does not wish to live without Eve:

O fairest of creation, last and best

Of all God's works...

How art thou lost, ...

...and now to death devote?

How can I live without thee...

Should God create another Eve, and I

Another rib afford, yet loss of thee

Would never from my heart; ...

Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state

Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe (9.896)

The contrast between the two people's motivations - Eve sins as a result of deception, but Adam sins of his own volition - is a great difference that suggests Adam is weaker because he had the power to prevent his ultimately devastating fate.

Although Adam and Eve are ashamed of what they have done, many have written about this original sin as the "fortunate fall." This term is often mentioned as a connection between the first sin and the appearance of Christ on earth: If the first humans had not sinned, then Jesus would not have come to redeem us all. This theory constitutes an

extremely important part of the Christian doctrine, but Milton never uses the term "fortunate." Instead, he alludes to this Christian doctrine, and the concept of the fall being good is clearly evident when Adam debates whether his sin has been good or bad. While speaking to the Archangel Michael and learning of the redemption, Adam says:

That all of this good of evil shall produce,

And evil turn to good, ...

...Full of doubt I stand,

Whether I should repent me now of sin

...or rejoice (12.470).

Adam's doubts about the true nature of his sin is another indication that he is not as strong, nor as confident, as Eve, who expresses no such doubts.

Eve's fall is replete with metaphors equating food to knowledge. Not only do we read that she is "Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else/ Regarded," but she is also expecting this fruit to fill her with "sapience" (9.786). Much has been written about Milton's use of this particular word because it represents so much more than simple knowledge. In PL sapience refers to the many things the first humans learn during their time in Eden, and they must learn everything. Adam and Eve need to learn about God, about nature, and even about each other. Obtaining such wisdom is of paramount importance if they are to do God's will on earth, for to deviate from that edict will spell disaster for them. Naturally, when Eve tells Adam that she has eaten from the fruit and encourages him to do so, she again uses this connection of food and knowledge to convince him to commit the same sin. Eve tells her man how the serpent has eaten and is still alive; she even tells Adam that the serpent has gained "human sense" from eating

that particular fruit (9.871). In essence, Eve not only wants Adam to eat, but to gain the same knowledge she has acquired from the tree's fruit. In explaining what she has gained from her experience at the tree of knowledge, Eve claims she wants to be equal to Adam, for she fears that if he does not gain the same knowledge she now has, then they cannot continue as before. Milton's expert words show how Eve is not merely tempting Adam, but that she truly believes she is now in a position above him, because she knows so much more than he, and she wants their relationship to continue on an equal basis:

*...that I
Have also tasted, and have also found
Th' effects to correspond, opener my eyes,
Dim erst, dilated spirits, ampler heart, ...
For bliss, as thou hast part, to me is bliss,
Tedious, unshared with thee, and odious soon.
Thou therefore also taste, that equal lot
May join us, equal joy, as equal love (9.873).*

This Eve loves Adam very much, and she cannot imagine being without him, so she sees the apple as a gift to him and deems it necessary for Adam to go along with her, or they cannot remain together. When Eve tells Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, she is also asking him to violate the one law of Eden, to break God's only taboo. Much has been written about this taboo, and, particularly, how it relates to incest.

Sigmund Freud's concept of incest, as well as its implication of taboo, is one theory often mentioned in writings about PL. According to Minaz Jooma, Freud argues that, since the forbidden fruit is linked to God, when Eve eats from the tree she commits

the ultimate act of incest – she eats God himself! - and breaks the only taboo in Eden (3). Other critics generally suggest that many traditional food taboos tie in with Eve and Adam’s fall, and some of those taboos exist even today. Examples of this include the reluctance to eat corn – still thought of today in many areas of the world as food for animals – and our own present refusal to eat insects and worms, although desirous in several Asian diets. Jooma writes that many theorists see such food taboos as directly correlated to the idea of incest in PL. Specifically, she points to Freud’s speculation that “incest prohibition came into being as a form of social control... because the totem [an animal or artifact, or a food item whose consumption is prohibited] is revered and identified with a group’s origins, it is deemed by the group to be akin to the father” (Jooma, 2). In much the same manner, God’s prohibition against eating the forbidden fruit is social control of Adam and Eve, although the only law which they must obey.

Claude Levi-Strauss does not agree completely with Freud’s theory, but does see the totem taboo as more symbolic in nature. He theorizes that is it not the actual eating of the totem that is prohibited, but instead it is the symbolic value placed upon the eating that matters (Jooma, 2). Similarly, when Eve eats the apple, the physical act of consumption does not matter as much as her violation of God's only commandment. In daring to go against the one rule in Paradise, Eve forfeits the perfection of her world and, essentially, "devours" its perfection, along with her own state of holiness. Whichever theory one chooses to support, and whether Eve is seen as incestuous or not, one must acknowledge the existence of the connection between food and incest in the poem.

The implication of incest is further included in the passages of PL that mention food or eating in a negative light, particularly in the gross descriptions of Satan's

daughter, Sin, early in PL. Her offspring, as soon as they are born, return to her bowels, "their repast," obviously cannibalizing their own mother (2.800). These godless children are the result of Sin's incestuous relationship with her son, Death, whom she claims would eat her, too, except he knows she would "prove a bitter morsel" (2.808). These explicit descriptions of the self-consuming nature of evil can also be applied to Adam and Eve, for their sin is completely self-destructive, resulting in the loss of their ideal lives. Satan's response to Sin's speech even includes reassurances related to food and eating:

And bring ye to the place where thou and Death

Shall dwell at ease, ...

...there ye shall be fed and filled

Immeasurably, all things shall be your prey (2.840).

This passage suggests that Sin and Death will eventually be in a place where food will be plentiful – much like Eden – but this nourishment will be possible only because other creatures will be their prey. Unlike Adam and Eve's idyllic Paradise, where food is acquired in peaceful, productive ways, these demonic beings will obtain their food through the sacrifice of other creatures. Eve's disobedience can be seen as an extension of this concept: She becomes Sin's prey when she is tempted, but she also feeds death through her act, for until then death does not even exist in Eden.

Since Adam and Eve are, essentially, married, critics often see their relationship as that of perfect spouses. These writers do not necessarily consider Eve inferior, but point out that her role in PL is to be an ideal helpmate to her man, as he must be for her. She works alongside him and has the free will to make her own decisions, even if those decisions are not always the best. These critics also call attention to the society under

which Milton wrote, indicating that perhaps the poet's goal was to make his own statement about how married people should behave. Halley calls this the "new and improved position of women in Puritan marriage," and she further sees Eve as "her husband's civil inferior, but...his spiritual equal" (662). Additionally, if one considers Milton's own relationships with women –particularly his bad luck with his wives – this theory may be quite correct.

Feminists often see Eve as a negative character, one who embodies all the stereotypical elements of a woman without substance. When such critics analyze the first woman, they always mention her naïve nature, claiming that she is gullible and vulnerable. Some critics even select Eve's silence during the dinner with Raphael as indicative of her meekness. There is no doubt that such criticism comes in part from dissatisfaction with the traditional societal role of women, and one cannot forget that Milton wrote during a very patriarchal period of time. That his writings should reflect the conditions under which he lived should be no surprise, and indeed should be expected. Additionally, as pointed out by McColley, Milton "could neither be expected to rewrite Genesis completely nor to personally reschedule the seventeenth-century notion of a woman's social role" (Bradford, 169). Therefore, if considered only as indicative of the traditional woman, yes, Milton's Eve is weak because she cooks, she is silent, and she commits the first sin. But if one sees Eve independently from any societal constraints, then she is a strong woman, cooking because she knows how to select and prepare food, and quiet during the times when she knows silence is more powerful. She sins not out of weakness, but because Satan deceives her, through her own desire for knowledge.

Another aspect of Eve's character that deserves exploration when discussing feminist criticism is her relationship with Adam. Critics often misinterpret Eve's more subtle nature as one of submissiveness. When remembering how they first met, Eve tells Adam that he cried out to her, "Part of my soul I seek thee, and thee claim/ My other half..." (4.487). Although this can be interpreted as submission on her part, one cannot dismiss the fact that it was God who put them both on Paradise, and to reject Adam would be to go against God's will. Instead, Eve realizes she is meant to be with Adam and goes with him willingly; Adam neither coerces nor fools her into being with him. Eve's is subtle in her dealings with Adam, often reflective of her gentler nature.

However, subtlety should not be mistaken for subservience, and is not necessarily a negative quality. During the passages when Eve appears docile, for example, when she leaves Adam and Raphael's conversation, she is choosing for herself what she feels is best for her. This woman is not leaving because anyone – specifically, any one man – has told her to leave, but because she decides to do this on her own. This suggests that Eve has insight enough to know what is best for her, an act that in itself indicates personal strength. This woman does not need a man to tell her what is best, for she can decide that alone. Adam himself knows Eve's true power, and he is awed by Eve's "specifically human qualities - not just her beauty, but her dignity, intelligence, and completeness" (Turner, 649). Turner further calls attention to the fact that Adam's domination of Eve is not mentioned until after the Fall, perhaps inferring that, were it not for the fall, these two humans would remain on an equal basis forever. Of course, Milton had no choice but to write what the scriptures dictate. Any alteration of this part of the Biblical story would have rendered his poem ineffective, so, instead of making his Eve overtly strong, he

presents us an Eve who is subtle, but definitely not weak. When Eve sins she does so not because she is powerless, and when she asks Adam to join her, she is not manipulating him, but making sure that the man she loves will remain with her, their union unbroken.

Adam feels similarly united to Eve, and, although he is well aware that their transgression will doom them both; he also eats in order to remain with Eve. However, once Adam eats the fruit, his own senses are altered. He no longer sees Eve as his divine mate, but as a sexual being, and shortly after he eats they make love in the garden. They made love prior to their sin, but their lovemaking is now different, somehow unholy. This sex contrasts so sharply from that original one, that one recalls the conversation Adam had with Raphael when the man asked if angels have sex in heaven. At that time, much before Adam's fall from grace, he must have considered sex with Eve such perfection that nothing could be better, hence his curiosity about angels and their physical relationships. But now, after the original sin has been committed, sex becomes a dirty act, a shameful union with which neither human is comfortable. This is the first sign that their spirituality and their physical beings have separated and now the two are no longer wholly perfect. Adam tells Eve that, for the first time, he wants her in a sexual way, not at all like their previous lovemaking:

*For never did thy beauty since the day
I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorned
With all perfections, so inflame my sense
With ardor to enjoy thee, fairer now (9.1029)*

When Adam and Eve sleep afterwards, it is not a restful sleep as before, since their sleep is filled with bad dreams and general unease. They finally awaken to the first

knowledge they have gained from the forbidden fruit: They are naked, and this is shameful to them both. Because they have sinned against God, Adam and Eve are now aware of feelings they did not have before, such as shame and lust. The two have become very human, far from the ideal beings they were at first. Thus, the fruit has indeed given them knowledge, but it is an unsavory knowledge, the recognition of negative feelings they did not have before. This new learning is indeed “unsavory,” for they have actually not gained anything, but lost their innocence and virtue. Contrary to the interdependence they enjoyed prior to their sin, Adam and Eve are now self-conscious as well as selfish.

When Eve convinces Adam to partake of the fruit, their exchange is one replete with love for one another, and an important aspect of this verbal exchange is the equality of their words. Eve speaks dearly of Adam, he of her, and all the while they both understand that what they are doing is wrong. Although Eve has taken the first step toward sin, her man does not reject her, for in accepting Eve with her faults Adam seals his own fate. He is well aware that his transgression will mean doom, but he does not care, because his love for Eve is so strong that even death cannot stop him from joining her in the first sin. Adam tells Eve:

*However I with thee have fixed my lot,
Certain to undergo like doom; if death
Consort with thee, death is to me as life; ...
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
Our state cannot be severed, we are one,
One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself (9.952).*

Neither one is happy to have given in to temptation, but the mere thought of being separated is more unbearable to them than death, or even God's punishment. They speak of the serpent, who does not die after eating the fruit, and thus they sin together and lose their innocence forever. Ironically, Adam sins in order not to be separated from Eve, yet his sin begins their ultimate separation. Although they remain physically together, their spiritual union starts to deteriorate as they begin to exhibit negative human qualities.

As in several previous passages, the forbidden fruit becomes a means by which Eve, and ultimately Adam, will gain insights about life of which neither is previously aware. Unfortunately, the knowledge they gain is not one of a blessed nature. Instead, they begin to have negative feelings and feel discomfort about themselves and their surroundings, indications that what they have learned is diametrically opposed to what they felt earlier.

As Adam and Eve begin to falter, they are equally transformed. We read how they have their first thoughts of shame, anger, hate, and suspicion, negative feelings unknown to them before the fall. Tears flow, but the tears are not Eve's alone because Adam also cries for what he knows is their total disgrace. They then have their first argument, based on accusations about the temptation. Adam feels Eve should have listened to him and not separated, but Eve feels she had the right to go her own way. She sternly asks him, "Was I to have never parted from thy side?" (9.1153). Eve then accuses Adam of not being forceful enough to keep her from separating when he knew there would be dangerous consequences. This verbal exchange continues, apparently ongoing: "Thus they in mutual accusation spent/ The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning/ And of their vain contest appeared no end" (9.1187). Milton's use of the word "fruitless" is a pun on the

forbidden fruit, as well as a statement about the couple's post-lapsarian condition, where they now face negative emotions they previously didn't even understand.

As we read this passage, it is clear Milton chooses not to give either person the upper hand. By making their argument non-stop, and by placing weight in both Adam and Eve's words, the poet lets us know neither character is to be seen as superior. More importantly, both are guilty of the first sin, not just Eve. Although she tasted the forbidden fruit first, because of Adam's co-guilt Eve retains her position of equal status with him. This concept is extremely important, for it directly challenges the feminist view of Eve as a secondary character in the story. Milton does no disservice to Eve, and often places her in the position of prominence, as stated earlier. The remainder of the poem continues this pattern, and Eve retains her position, at least in the poem, if not in Eden.

As PL nears its end, food is still a vital component in the poem, and Milton continues to use metaphors of food. As the Son tells God of Adam's repentance, his beginning words are of the "first-fruits, " meaning Cain's offering to God, and he also mentions "fruits of more pleasing savor" (11.22). God responds by telling how the human couple's disobedience has tainted Eden and even disrupted its ecological perfection, citing the "distemper" that is now apparently in Eden and the "gross,/ and mortal food" it now contains (11.53). During these lines, and through his powerful reprimand of Adam and Eve, God relies on food imagery, in much the same way that other characters in the poem have. Even the food that Adam eats after the fall becomes cursed. Since he and Eve succumbed to temptation, their judgment is harsh, and God tells Adam, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake, thou in sorrow/ Shalt eat thereof all the days of thy life" (10.201). Not only will their food be cursed, but they will labor hard, and ultimately die:

*Thorns also and thistles it shall bring thee forth
Unbid, and thou shalt eat th' herb of the field,
In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,
Till thou return unto the ground, for thou
Out of the ground wast taken; know thy birth,
For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return (10.203).*

Although Adam and Eve will face hardships because of their sin, they will not be entirely without God. As the Archangel Michael describes the couple's future, he tells Adam God will be with him, "in valley and in plain/ God is as here" (11.349). Continuing his narrative, the angel advises Adam to "learn/True patience" and live a pious life until the time of his death (11.360). Michael then describes a party scene "with feast and music," warning Adam not to be tempted, but to remain as he was created, "to nobler end/ Holy and pure" (11.592). During Michael's speech to Adam Eve is sleeping, but she has already been warned of her fate. This news came to her directly from God, who explained that she would lose her equality with Adam, presumably because she was tempted first and because she convinced Adam to sin along with her. Her punishment, in addition to painful childbearing, is to submit to her husband's rule as God warns her:

*Thy sorrow I will greatly multiply
By thy conception; children thou shalt bring
In sorrow forth, and to thy husband's will
Thine shall submit, he over thee shall rule (10.195).*

CONCLUSION

One of the most complex works of literature, PL is the well-known story of Adam and Eve and their eventual fall from grace. But John Milton tells this story in such a manner that over three hundred years after its first publication people are still debating its intricacies. That food should play such a predominant role in this epic poem is not surprising, since Milton's use of food analogies and metaphors remain some of the most effective ever written and his earlier works include similar references to food. In PL we read of food as knowledge, as power, and as punishment. But most important in this writing are the food references that revolve around Eve, and her connections to the food presented in the work allow us to see the manifestation of her strengths.

Several of the books in PL cover some aspect of Eve's superior nature and we begin to see that she, not Adam, is the stronger of the two characters. Milton gave his Eve a vital role in this writing, a prominent position that helps one understand the many facets of the poem. Through Eve – and specifically through her dealings with food – we see the almost perfect, pre-lapsarian relationship between Adam and Eve and their God. Food also helps shed light on how this couple respects nature and learns to live in harmony with everything they have in Paradise. Unfortunately, after their sin Adam and Eve lose their ability to treat nature (and each other) with respect, perhaps an indication of our own current, modern world, in which self is valued above God's natural gifts.

Milton, writing during a period of religious instability and intense patriarchal constraints, has managed to present the first woman as one of strength, character, and finesse. Although years ahead of any feminist movement, he gives his Eve the most prominent position in his poem, and it is mostly through food that we see the evidence of

this. Literary critics often see Eve as inferior, but Milton does not allow that visualization, and he writes quite specifically of an empowered Eve, a strong woman, a woman ahead of her time. Milton's Paradise Lost is unusual because it is so famous that many have heard of the poem, yet few have read it in its entirety. However, since the story of Adam and Eve remains a popular one, and still fascinates us, it is worth an exploration of the poem to see exactly how well Milton interprets the tale.

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