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Curious Girls Don't Follow Rules: Eve and Obedience in *Paradise Lost*

But of the Tree whose operation brings
Knowledg of good and ill, which I have set / The Pledge of thy
Obedience and thy Faith

Paradise Lost 8.323-325

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BEFORE THE FALL

In its main entry on “obedience,” the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes the term as “the action or practice of obeying or doing what one is bidden; the fact or quality of being obedient; submission to the rule or authority of another; compliance with or performance of a command, law, etc. Freq. with *to*” (“Obedience, n”). When combined with the notion of “yielding” included in the second half of the entry, this definition illuminates the role of obedience within *Paradise Lost*. First and foremost, for obedience to exist at all there needs to be an authority figure with whom others must comply. God fulfills this role in the text. As the divine creator and supreme universal power, God maintains an absolute and generally unquestioned command over his creations. He establishes rules and laws which must be obeyed. In this regard, God differs from other authority figures who do not have the same all-encompassing control as the divine maker. His omnipotence allows him to demand a high level of obedience from his creations.

In addition to God as the omnipotent ruler, Milton's plot relies upon those characters who doubt or stray from God's word. Both Satan and Eve act as disobedient characters within the text, although they do so in different ways. The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* defines “disobedient” as “withholding obedience; refusing or failing to obey; neglectful or not observant of authoritative command; guilty of breach of prescribed duty; refractory, rebellious” (“Disobedient, adj. and n.”). Satan, who disobeys God early on in the poem, is immediately depicted as the villainous character. As the leader of the rebellion from heaven, Satan refuses to obey God's decrees. He represents the opposition to obedience and goes so

far as to look for ways to upset the harmony in God's universe. He embodies the willful resistance highlighted in the *OED* definition when he attempts to disturb the peace of God's world. Eve, however, remains free from scrutiny for a majority of the poem. For the most part, she actively practices obedience to God alongside her husband, Adam. Together, the couple yield to God's authority and live out their carefree lives in Eden. Eventually, however, Eve does not do "what [she] is bidden," ("Obedience, n.") and instead brushes aside her creator's law in favor of her own desires. By eating the apple from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Eve actively disobeys God and sets off a sequence of events that define the human condition in the centuries to come.

In the critical tradition surrounding *Paradise Lost*, Eve's obedience is a major point of conflict. Critics cannot agree upon her willingness to follow God's rule and often paint her as either renegade and sinful or confused and naive. Eve is the variable within Milton's story. She does not seem to exist entirely within God's domain and is therefore somewhat of an anomaly within the text. Adam cannot fully understand her, Satan cannot completely influence her, and God cannot entirely control her. Eve is unique in her partial autonomy. She has some freedom to make her own decisions and to do as she sees fit. Unlike Adam and the angels who practice a blind obedience to God, Eve makes use of her free will. She prefers to reason for herself than to accept what God commands without question. Although she is not inherently disobedient in the same way that Satan is, she does let her partial autonomy guide her in different directions. While she does for the most part tend to obey her creator and praise his divinity, she also allows herself to wander toward the side of disobedience. She acts as an individual as much as she can under the influence of God and Adam.

Eve's uniqueness as a character is established immediately upon her entrance into the text. In her first speech with her husband, she relates her arrival into the world. Her "birth" is full of subtle disobediences that mark her as different from Adam, the most perfect of God's human creations. Unlike Adam, who immediately turns his eye on the sky and on God's power, Eve focuses upon herself and upon the earth around her. She does not instantly establish God as her omnipotent creator. She recalls:

As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A Shape within the watry gleam appeared
Bending to look on me, I started back,
It started back, but pleas'd I soon returnd,
Pleas'd it returnd as soon with answering looks (4.460-464)

Eve's appearance on Earth directly contrasts with Adam's first moments of life. She is born in shade while he is born under a sunny sky. In this passage, her first thought is to look down toward the ground below her; Adam, conversely, looks toward the heavens. Eve bends down to the clear water as she catches a glimpse of her own reflection. She is enthralled by her image and returns to the water to continue gazing upon herself after her initial shock.

Understandably, this moment is often interpreted as a repetition of the Narcissus myth by Eve. God's second creation is too vain to admire her omnipotent father or obey her perfect husband. However, Eve's actions in this moment are not necessarily as self-centered as some may think. Eve is new to the world when she experiences her own image for the first time. If anything, Eve's fascination with her reflection signals God's success as a creator. He has created such perfect beings that they cannot help but admire themselves in their flawlessness. If anything, Eve obeys God by appreciating her reflection. She worships him by worshipping

herself. The only issue then is that she does not praise God directly here, but rather idolizes him indirectly through her admiration of herself and the world around her.

Eve's only "failure" at obedience here is that she does not worship God enough. She certainly loves and praises her maker often during her daily tasks. Yet because of her indirect connection to God, she cannot appreciate or obey him in the same way that Adam can. She seems to be aware of this inequality when she calls Adam "My Author and Disposer," and declares, "what thou bidst / Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains, / God is thy law, thou mine" (4.635-637). Eve makes clear here that she is only obedient to God through Adam. Her husband is her physical creator, since from his rib was she formed. For this reason, she attributes to him the power of creation, even though God was the one who truly formed her body and soul. In this way, she maintains stronger ties to her husband than to God. Yet even though this is true, she still remains faithful to God through Adam's faith in him. As she declares in the lines above, since "God is [Adam's] law" and Adam is her law, then God is her law too, even if it *is* mediated through Adam. Admittedly, this mediation does distance Eve from God and make it easier for her to act independently from her maker. For the time being, however, she is just as devout to God as her husband is, regardless of the strength of their respective bonds to the creator.

Not only is Eve indirectly faithful to God through Adam and his faithfulness, but she is also faithful to God by being obedient to her husband. In their relationship, Adam is the standard male patriarch while Eve is his adoring, obedient wife. God establishes this marital hierarchy from the outset by making Adam his first, perfect creation and by placing Eve into a secondary role as Adam's wife and helpmeet. As Eve notes above, "God ordains" her

obedience to her husband. By following Adam wholeheartedly, Eve obeys God's law. She establishes her husband as her center of attention and does all he commands. In this way, Adam becomes the most perfect being to both God and Eve. They both adore and value him highly. Yet by doing this, Eve and God also create distance between themselves, since they rely upon a middleman to maintain their connection.

This idea that Adam is the mediator between Eve and God is furthered by the initial interaction between Adam and Eve in the garden. Eve stops admiring herself only when Adam's voice pulls her away from her reverie. By contrast, in Adam's first moments on earth, it is God's voice that first calls out to him and instructs him about the ways of the world. Adam's connection to God is immediately established. Eve, on the other hand, must rely upon her husband to dictate to her all heavenly wisdom. Perhaps because of this indirect link to her maker, she does not immediately obey her husband, but instead exercises some independence. Her secondary tie to God provides her with a greater opportunity for free thought than Adam ever has. In comparison to herself, she says of Adam:

... , yet methought less faire,
 Less winning soft, less amiablie milde,
 Then that smooth watry image; back I turnd,
 Thou following cryd'st aloud, Return faire Eve, (4.478-481)

Eve's decision about whether or not to pay attention to this voice has to do with Adam's physical appearance. In her opinion, he is not nearly as attractive as she is, and so she feels no need to obey him. She is more fascinated with her own reflection and chooses to devote her attentions to it. The "smooth watry image" is more pleasing to her than the new being in front of her. Her statement "back I turnd" is particularly powerful, since it demonstrates her conscious rejection of her husband. Even if it is only temporarily, Eve obeys neither her

husband nor God, preferring herself over the two of them. Her bond with the earth and her humanity is more powerful than her holy ties to God or her conjugal duties to her husband. Her birth in a place full of lush, natural beauty connects her to the land from the outset. This comes in direct contrast with Adam's first moments of consciousness, which occur under the sun and with a clear view toward the sky. Adam aspires toward a heavenly relationship with God while Eve relishes her close ties with nature. Furthermore, that she prioritizes this bond over God or her husband foreshadows the scene of the fall. Eve is fascinated by the beauty of the land, and the reflection of herself that she sees within it, and exhibits a much stronger bond to it than Adam does. She loves the garden in its entirety, from the "smooth watry image" to the fruit that leads to her downfall.

In the end, however, Eve does pay attention to Adam's call, even if it takes some time for her to come around. After Adam explains to her how she was created, Eve begins to show her attachment to him. By the end of the scene, their bond is evident. Eve relates how Adam's hand "Seisd mine, I yielded, and from that time see / How beauty is excelld by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" (4.489-491). While this moment of Eve's submission is clear, it is somewhat undercut by Eve's final message. Adam "seisd" her, thereby claiming physical and symbolic ownership of her. What is more, Eve "yielded," and thus acknowledged and granted Adam's leadership over her. This action is significant because it implies that Eve recognizes and accepts Adam as her husband under God's law. From this point on, she lives under God's dominion and obeys his commands as dictated to her by Adam.

However, her final two lines in this section highlight both the strength of her connection to Adam over God and the notion that she already has in mind thoughts that will lead her to fall. Her statement that “beauty is excelld by manly grace” implies a few things about her relationships with Adam and with God. Eve comments on how the “beauty” she initially admires is improved by Adam’s “manly grace.” Not only does he complement her in their pair, but he also betters her. The word “grace” is interesting here, since it connects Adam with God. Adam’s God-given grace is what strengthens Eve. She does not receive this grace but must instead rely upon Adam for any connection to God. She needs Adam in order to have any bond with God whatsoever. It is understandable that she devotes a large majority of her attention to her husband and not to God. By remaining obedient to Adam, Eve is obedient to God. Yet although she accepts this obedience when she yields to Adam’s grasp, she does seem to desire more than is readily available to her. Her final statement about “wisdom, which alone is truly fair,” is a moment of powerful foreshadowing in the poem. Eve may have accepted her husband’s dominance, but she still dreams of what is momentarily beyond her grasp. She recognizes “beauty” and “manly grace” as two desirable concepts. Yet it is wisdom that truly appeals to her. When she notes that wisdom, over everything else, “alone is truly fair,” she hints at her desire to gain what is limited to her. On the one hand, she is content with her realization that Adam is her soulmate and that she needs him to be spiritually complete. On the other, she expresses a longing for knowledge in general. In her mind, wisdom is the most valuable thing that she could have. Furthermore, since she has already obtained beauty and grace, wisdom is all she has left to seek.

This curiosity about knowledge seems to linger with Eve for the rest of the day and into the night. Yet, although it plays a central role in her prophetic dream, critics tend to ignore it as a motivation for her unconscious actions. Instead, Satan takes precedence in the dream scene as the antagonistic motivator behind Eve's eventual sin. In general, the question of whether Satan maintains an influence over Eve has provoked critics throughout the years. As the two deviant characters within the text, Eve and Satan are essential to the development of the plot. Their interactions with one another are particularly fascinating, since neither of them is directly connected to God. Furthermore, their thoughts and motivations are not always apparent since, unlike Adam, they do not continually seek God's favor. Because of this, the scene in which Eve relates her dream to Adam is somewhat confusing. Eve's desires and beliefs in this moment are not at all clear, especially when one considers Satan's possible influence over her. Eve is not clearly obedient to one person or idea, but seems to feel simultaneously allegiant to Adam, God, and herself. This is, perhaps, the "problem" with Eve, or the reason why she causes so many difficulties for the characters within the text and for the critics studying it. She is not blindly obedient to any one thing, but instead determines for herself what she believes is right.

Satan's attempt to corrupt Eve in her sleep is what makes her dream such a point of controversy. The night of the dream, Satan sneaks into Eden and, in the guise of a toad, whispers corrupt words to her. He hopes that, by "inspiring venom, he might taint / Th' animal Spirits that from pure blood arise" (4.804-805). His goal is to bring forth Eve's basic human instincts as a means of weakening her dedication to God. He believes his "Devilish art" (4.801) will poison her "pure blood" enough to make her question what she previously

accepted and desire what is restricted to her. He seems to know that he cannot convince her outright to go against God's word, but he believes he can introduce enough doubt into her mind to make her question her maker's restrictions.

While Eve does react to Satan's venomous words, she is not moved to question God's commands as easily as Satan would hope. Instead, she appears so upset and perturbed by the night's events that it remains unclear whether Satan truly influences her. She begins by describing to Adam the trouble and confusion that she "Knew never till this irksom night; methought / Close at mine ear one call'd me forth to walk / With gentle voice, I thought it thine" (5.35-37). Eve is conscious that this night is somehow significantly different from her other ones. She feels troubled by the events in the dream and does not know what to make of them or how to relate them to her waking existence. Her imagined adventure seems so real that she has trouble distinguishing actuality from imagination. She is aware that her nighttime adventure is an unusual occurrence, since she never encountered anything like it until "this irksom night." Yet the "methought" that follows this phrase is significant. Although it is part of the sentence in the following line, it is located on the same line as "this irksom night." This suggests two different meanings. On the one hand, Eve relates how she thought she heard a voice by her ear. On the other, Eve expresses doubt over her experience and leaves open the possibility that she could have had such disturbing dreams as this one in the past and just not remember them. That this one occurred at all worries her and she becomes more uncertain of her hold on reality.

The issue of obedience ties in heavily to the second part of this quotation. Eve hears a "gentle voice" that "call'd me forth to walk." In her dream she follows it without question,

since she believes it to be Adam calling her into the garden. What is fascinating here is that she blindly obeys an unembodied voice without ever asking for or receiving identification of its owner. She is so sure that the “gentle voice” belongs to her husband that she does not feel the need to confirm her assumption. Admittedly, at this point in the poem Eve has only heard the voices of Adam and God’s heavenly creations. As Adam is her partner and the person with whom she spends the entirety of her days, her supposition that the voice must be Adam’s does not seem entirely unfounded. What is more is that Raphael has not yet warned her and Adam of Satan or the impending danger. She has no reason to believe the voice would belong to someone trying to harm her. Because of this, her obedience to the voice is not so unreasonable after all. She believes that by following the voice she will be obeying her husband’s command. Up until this moment, obedience has always been a good thing. Eve knows that by listening to Adam and doing as she is told, she can uphold her obedience to God. Since God has kept her ignorant of the evil around her and told her to remain obedient to her husband, her dream decision to follow the voice into the garden can hardly be objectionable.

However, as the dream continues, her obedience to God wavers as she begins to feel the lure of temptation. She soon realizes she has been blindly following not Adam’s voice, but a seemingly angelic one. This heavenly figure tries to tempt her with compliments and appeal to her desire to discover the unknown. When he finally eats from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Eve is shocked. Yet she cannot dismiss her lingering curiosity about the taste and the power of the fruit. The key moment comes when the being offers her a sample.

Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part

Which he had pluckt; the pleasant savourie smell
 So quick'nd appetite, that I, methought,
 Could not but taste. (5.83-86)

By placing the fruit “even to [Eve’s] mouth,” Satan, in the guise of an angel, makes it impossible for Eve to ignore the fruit in question. Even more interesting is the fact that he offers her “that same fruit” that he already tasted. The idea that he and Eve could share the fruit is both troubling and suggestive. There is an obvious sexual undertone to the moment, since Satan wants Eve to eat from the same fruit, the same seed, that he already sampled. There is a suggested intimacy that comes from sharing the food. By eating the fruit after Satan has already bitten into it, Eve would place her lips, a somewhat sacred part of her body, onto the same spot as Satan has already placed his. This moment of sharing suggests that, by eating the apple, not only would Eve break her obedience to God, but she would also break her obedience to Adam. Although eating the fruit Satan offers is not an overt betrayal, it certainly carries sexual, deviant implications.

Overall, however, Eve is not drawn to the fruit for either its sexual or intellectual symbolic value. Instead, she is attracted more to its physical qualities than anything else. Even after Satan attempts to persuade her with ideas about increased knowledge and heavenly aspirations, Eve still notes how “the pleasant savourie smell” entices her. Such a reaction suits Eve’s nature. Her faithfulness to her husband remains intact as she praises the beauty of the fruit before her. Her response seems like a natural one, since she is strongly attached to Eden and the life within it. She cannot help but admire one of the garden’s products, just as she could not help admiring her reflection in the water. In this moment, the parallels between Eve and the fruit become clear. Both are attractive products of nature that

embody the beauty of God's creative powers. Yet both also act as forces of temptation, since Eve has a strong desire to eat the fruit just as Adam has an overwhelming need to be with Eve.

Whether Eve eventually eats the fruit upon which she gazes is another story entirely. Her description leaves the supposedly climactic moment in the dream shrouded in ambiguity. She is clearly tempted by the "savourie smell," and her resulting "quick'nd appetite" makes her consumption of the fruit seem just moments away. However, with the reappearance of "methought" and no clear statement about her biting into anything, it remains unclear whether Eve actually dream-eats the fruit or not. "Methought" implies two different ideas here, namely that Eve either sees eating the fruit as the logical next step or that she doubts her memories of that moment. Her next four words do not provide any more clarity, since "could not but taste" means neither "I did taste" nor "I did not taste." The two negative words in the phrase, "not" and "but," highlight Eve's adversarial relationship with eating. She wants to taste the appealing fruit but knows that to do so would go against Adam's and, by extension, God's desires. Perhaps for this reason she refrains from clarifying her final decision, since to have clearly eaten the apple would have immediately doomed her to the fall. Of course, her conflicting desires alone make her a target for heavenly concern. On the one hand, she wants to obey her husband and her creator. On the other she is curious and wants to listen to her senses and experience the restricted. By leaving the listener with a vague understanding, she maintains her comfortable position within Eden. She may not be as unwaveringly devoted to God as Adam is, but she knows that God's law is powerful and that disobeying it could lead to severe consequences.

Regardless of whether or not Eve eats the fruit, she is genuinely affected by the events of the night. Her final statement highlights her mixed emotions about the dream and about what she did within it. She ends her narrative by telling Adam, “O how glad I wak’d / To find this but a dream!” (5.92-93). The enjambment in this line succeeds at conveying Eve’s confusion over the event. She is both delighted and dismayed by her imagined actions. When taken alone, “Oh how glad I wak’d” implies that Eve had an enjoyable night and continues to feel pleased even upon waking. It hints at her possible contentment in disobeying God and eating the sole restricted fruit. The second line, however, serves to temper Eve’s happiness and bring her back into the realm of God’s law. She expresses relief over her discovery that the events of the night were only in her imagination. Yet her pleasure over this fact cannot necessarily be explained away by her feelings of sadness over her imagined actions. She could also be relieved to know that she was the only one to experience this dream and know the true events of the night. In the end, Eve alone holds the truth of the dream while Adam can only trust her narrative blindly. In this way she maintains an overt obedience to Adam and to God. Her thoughts and desires on the inside, however, remain all her own.

This external obedience is what allows Eve to maintain her reputation as the untainted, faithful wife for so long. Up until the scene of the fall in Book 9, Eve is, for the most part, a model wife. She obeys her husband and obtains God’s word through him. Yet her obedience again brings up the question about where her true loyalty lies. As committed to God as Eve may be, she does not receive messages from God as Adam does and therefore must rely upon the second-hand information that her husband provides. Because of this, Eve

seems to be more obedient to Adam than she is to God. Her indirect connection to her creator means that her understanding of God's commands is inevitably weaker than Adam's. Perhaps for this reason it is easier for her to diverge from the unquestioning obedience that Adam practices. The scene in which Eve suggests to Adam that they separate to work on different tasks is one of the most crucial moments in the discussion of obedience, second only to the moment in which Eve eats the apple. She casually offers an alternative to their united workforce, saying, "Thou therefore now advise / Or hear what to my minde first thoughts present, / Let us divide our labours" (9.212-214). Prior to this moment, Adam and Eve worked together gardening and tending to the plant life in Eden. Eve's suggestion here seems unpremeditated, although we cannot be entirely sure since we never receive a glimpse into her thought process. Instead, we can only assume that her train of thought is spontaneous and new. Admittedly, this is quite possible. This is the first moment in the text that she makes any attempt to separate from her husband, as evidenced by "to my minde first thoughts present." Her idea does not seem to be inherently sinful and instead seems like an attempt to be more productive and to care for the garden God provides them.

Regardless, it is the suggestion itself that offers the most illumination into Eve's obedience. No matter what her intent is, her idea to separate calls into question God's system of creation. God designed the human race with Adam, or man, as its leader. By leaving Adam, even if for just a short period of time, Eve literally and symbolically breaks from patriarchal influence and from her character as an obedient creature. She becomes an independent being, free from the command or authority of others. Yet Eve shows evidence of her desire for independence through just her thought alone. Her idea to separate is an original

one. Adam would never suggest it since he is too enamoured of her even to imagine leaving her for a moment. God would likely not approve of it either because it involves Eve becoming temporarily independent from her husband's, and God's, dominion. Eve formulates this plan all on her own. Furthermore, she does not back down from it even after Adam tries to dissuade her. He explains how much he will miss her, but admits he could allow a short parting with a "sweet returne" (9.250). Overall though, he makes clear that he prefers her to remain by his side for both her safety and his pleasure. He reminds her of the danger of Satan and suggests that it would be better for them to remain united and untempted.

Although Adam seems particularly adamant about staying together, Eve does not let go of her idea and instead argues for it further. She questions Adam's faith in her steadfastness when she states, "But that thou shouldst my firmness therefore doubt / To God or thee, because we have a foe / May tempt it, I expected not to hear" (9.279-281). Eve's response here can be interpreted in one of two ways. First, she is genuinely shocked that her husband doubts her. She believes that her love for Adam and her commitment to God will protect her from Satan's trickery and sees no reason to be concerned by the threat. She is surprised that Adam would think it even a possibility that she could be tempted while away from her husband's oversight. The second interpretation is that Eve uses Adam's doubts in her favor so as to fully convince him. She plays the strength of their bond against him, since to question her faithfulness would be to question the power of their relationship. Adam cannot help but fall into her trap since he does not want to displease the love of his life. Eve knows that while Adam would prefer to remain with her at all times, he will let her go in this

instance since to forbid her would be to call into question the purity of their love for one another.

In this situation then, Eve is not obedient to Adam. If she were, she would not have brought up her idea at all or would have stopped arguing in favor of it as soon as Adam expressed his doubts. Instead, her desire for independence wins out and she continues to push for their temporary separation even after Adam hesitates to accept the plan. She passes over all of his words of caution in her determination to momentarily leave his company. In what seems like a rush to depart into the garden, she declares:

With thy permission then, and thus forewarned
 Chiefly by what thy own last reasoning words
 Touchd onely, that our trial, when least sought,
 May finde us both perhaps farr less prepar'd (9.378-381)

Even though Adam clearly wants to remain in her company, Eve is adamant about her idea and refuses to give it up so easily. She uses her husband's feelings for her as a tool to help her get what she wants. Eve successfully overpowers Adam in this scene by expressing an original idea and by doing what she has to in order to get what she wants. She uses her charm to gain her husband's permission to wander out on her own. Granted, Eve assumes this permission more than Adam gives it. Yet she obtains it nevertheless. She also attempts to reassure Adam by acknowledging his forewarning of the evil lurking around the garden. She hears his words and will obey them as best she can. However, she also hints that perhaps Adam's warning will not be enough to resist the temptation to sin. His words of warning "Touchd onely" upon the full significance of the danger. Eve will try to obey, although even her best efforts may not be sufficient. She notes that they are "perhaps farr less prepar'd" for their "trial" than Adam believes them to be. Eve is somehow cognizant of their ignorance of

the danger of sin. She does not know what will come of it all, but she recognizes that the temptation their unknown foe provides is not something to be taken lightly. Instead, it is something for which neither of them can truly prepare, but for which they both must remain watchful and wary.

At the end of this discussion, Eve wins the freedom to leave Adam for a while and to be an independent being. If only for a short period, she is free to do as she pleases and to make her own choices. She is her own person and does not have to worry about the force of patriarchal judgment. Significantly, after she promises to look out for the “Foe” that plagues the garden, “from her Husbands hand her hand / Soft she withdrew” (9.385-386). While hand imagery is meaningful throughout the entire text, it is particularly significant in this moment. Notably, the first instance of handholding occurs when Adam seizes Eve’s hand during her retelling of her first moments on earth in Book 4. When Adam forcefully grabs hold of Eve then, he physically and symbolically binds her to him. Eve, in this instance, lives up to her God-assigned image of the submissive, unquestioning wife and yields to him.

By contrast, the scene in Book 9 shows a markedly different behavior by Eve. After she persists in her desire to work away from Adam, she solidifies this decision by making a physical show of separation from him. She breaks their union, even if it is for a short time only. Furthermore, that Eve, and not Adam, enacts the physical distancing highlights her disobedience of God’s hierarchical structure. She is the one who seeks independence; Adam would prefer to remain as near to her as possible. By removing her hand from Adam’s, Eve becomes the authority figure in their relationship. Her beauty and perfection help her to influence and gain control over Adam. She is far from obedient in this scene. Although she

attempts to use her charm to soften the reality of her action, such as by softly, and not forcefully, pulling away from her husband, she still disobeys his preferences and subverts God's authoritative hierarchy. According to God's law, Eve is under both God and Adam's authority. Yet she somehow bypasses this regulation and creates a temporary independence for herself. She is a subtle renegade figure in God's world. Although Eve, unlike Satan, never acts maliciously in a conscious effort to subvert God's authority, she still manages to undermine her maker's rules in her quest for independence. While Eve may not mean to undercut God's creative works, her desire for something beyond what she has been given leads her down a dangerous path of subtle disobediences. When she finally eats the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, she commits the ultimate act of disobedience and forever destroys her life of blissful ignorance in Eden.

Overall then, Eve's decision in Book 9 to leave Adam and work independently signals the beginning of the end of the couple's life in Eden. Eve unknowingly makes herself available to Satan's advances when she strays from her husband's presence. As she works alone in the garden, she provides the serpent with the perfect opportunity to sneak into her presence and attempt to convince her to sin. Yet while Satan is often blamed as the chief perpetrator in Adam and Eve's fall from God's grace, Eve herself seems to have a high degree of agency. She has no one to restrain her mind or her actions in this scene and uses her temporary freedom to think and question as she pleases. She makes her thought process clear and spends a fair amount of time pondering over whether or not to eat the fruit. When she finally bites into the apple, she does so of her own free will and without any motivation to obey anyone other than herself.

When Satan as the serpent maneuvers his way into her sight, Eve is taken by surprise. Although she does not suspect the serpent of being the evil “Foe” about which she has been warned, she is curious about its speaking abilities, and so she continues to converse with it in an attempt to learn more about why it is so different from the other animals. However, her curiosity turns into apprehension once she realizes where Satan has led her. She initially dismisses his words of praise about the apple.

But of this Tree we may not taste nor touch;
 God so commanded, and left that Command
 Sole Daughter of his voice; the rest, we live
 Law to our selves, our Reason is our Law. (9.651-654)

While Eve’s first words here seem like a recital of the divine law that has been fed to her, her final message provides important insight into her understanding of her own obedience. Eve begins by recognizing and restating God’s prime restriction, that neither she nor Adam may “taste nor touch” the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This line and its follow-up, that “God so commanded” this limitation, prove that Eve acknowledges God as the supreme world power. God’s ability to create and reinforce commandments about Eden seems reasonable, since the garden would not exist at all without his efforts. Furthermore, as this regulation is the “Sole daughter of his voice,” Eve reasons that it should be maintained out of due respect to its omnipotent maker.

However, the phrase “Sole Daughter” also serves to further highlight the separation between God and Eve. God’s commandment, and not Eve, is his only daughter. His word holds a higher significance to him than Eve does. He may have created her, but she is not his daughter in the same way that Adam is his son. This line in *Paradise Lost* parallels the story in Genesis 6.1-4, which narrates the process of human procreation on earth. The human race

began to multiply because the “sons of God saw the daughters of men” (*King James Bible*, Genesis 6.2). This description of the relationship between the different sexes and God perfectly describes the characterization of Adam and Eve within the poem. Although Adam is not the heavenly Son of God, he is God’s son in the sense that God created him. Eve, however, is not God’s daughter. Although God provided the spiritual force to create her, it was Adam who contributed the material. In this way, Adam is a son of God while Eve, in accordance with the Genesis chapter, is a daughter of man.

The statement following this declaration about God’s sole restriction upon the tree does not help to support the notion of Eve’s unwavering obedience to God. On the contrary, instead of speaking about her devotion to her maker, Eve mentions her relative independence from any holy limitations. She notes how, with the exception of the Tree, the garden is open to her and Adam. They are “Law to our selves.” They have the power to do as they see fit and to create their own way of life within God’s paradise. This total freedom is regulated only by their intellects which, although God-given, still allow them to think and act as they please. Eve’s statement that “our Reason is our law” illustrates her comprehension of her and Adam’s relative independence. She notes how Reason, and not God, is what guides them through their daily activities and helps them select what to do.

As an extension of this notion then, Eve’s obedience lies more closely with her Reason than it does with God. As in the case with Eve’s allegiance to Adam versus God, Eve maintains a direct connection to her Reason and considers it her “law” in determining what is best. She is still linked to God through her relationship with Adam and her existence in the garden in general. However, what is important is that all her connections with her maker are

of a secondary nature. Eve obeys God by obeying her God-given reasoning abilities, just as she also obeys God by obeying her husband. Furthermore, since Adam's reason generally aligns precisely with God's will, Eve always knows what the divine approach to any situation should be. Of course, as the scene in which Eve persuades Adam to let her work independently illustrates, these secondary bonds allow Eve some flexibility in her link with God. As the moments of the fall prove, Eve upholds her connections to both Adam and her Reason even when she strays from God's command. She recognizes the strength of her primary ties and chooses to support them over her indirect obedience to God.

Eve further illustrates her obedience to her Reason during her soliloquy in Book 9 just before she consumes the apple. She spends a significant amount of time deciding whether the serpent speaks the truth and whether the apple is a remedy to her ignorance. She notes how God forbids her and Adam from eating from the tree even though he himself praises it. He sends mixed messages about the role of the Tree, since he "Forbids us then to taste, but his forbidding / Commends thee more, while it inferrs the good" (9.753-754). Eve meditates heavily upon her allegiance to her maker in this section. She is confused about why God would restrict something so good and so powerful from his two most prized creations. His ban on the tree is surprising, since he gives the couple free rein on the rest of the garden. He limits them from this one source of knowledge even though he seems to value their acquisition of knowledge in general, such as when he sends Raphael down to speak with Adam in Book 5. Eve does not know how to sort through this mixed information. At this point, her curiosity is piqued and she desires to learn more about the tree. She recognizes that God forbids interaction with the tree and yet she wants to experience it. That she

acknowledges this conflict is troubling in regard to her obedience to God. She makes no attempt to hide her interest in doing what is forbidden by her maker. She seems to brush aside her obedience to God in this moment. Although she still recognizes his dominance, she also realizes that his law contains some contradictory information. Her indecision is understandable here, since she must settle her warring allegiances to God and to her own Reason, respectively. She knows she should obey God's restriction, and yet her Reason points out the flaw in his command and guides her to seek the knowledge that she lacks.

Her only real hesitation then has to do with the death that could result from eating the apple. She wonders about the truth of God's warning, that if they eat of the tree they will die. She attempts to balance this questionable truth with her longing to gain wisdom. She does not understand why God

Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?
Such prohibitions binde not. But if Death
Bind us with after-bands, what profits then
Our inward freedom?... (9.759-762)

The power dynamic illustrated in these lines provides a clear picture of Eve's reasoning about her obedience. She is close to convincing herself to eat the apple and yet she still is wary about the possibility of death. She declares that God's mere forbidding of her consumption of the apple does nothing to sway her from her desire to eat it. She sees God as the supremely good and wise ruler and does not understand why he would want to limit her and Adam from achieving a similar status. She disagrees with God's principle of knowledge within bounds. Her statement that "Such prohibitions binde not" is powerful, since through it she revokes God's ban on the tree as a means of limiting them from becoming better and wiser individuals. She rejects her obedience to God in this instance because she does not

agree with his ordinance. It seems that if there were no risk of death attached to eating the apple, Eve would have taken a bite long ago.

The possibility of death does exist, however. Eve worries whether death will “Bind us with after-bands.” In other words, she is fearful about the consequences that could come from eating the apple. She does not want to go through the trouble of obtaining the goodness and wisdom only to die a few moments later. Her question “what profits then / Our inward freedom?” shows her reasonable line of thinking. Eve does something similar to a cost-benefit analysis here as she ponders over whether or not to consume the fruit. She concerns herself with which action, namely abstinence or consumption, will “profit” her the most. She wants to make the selection that will most benefit her own existence, regardless of what God commands. In terms of garnering Eve’s obedience, God is no match for the Reason he bestowed upon her.

As Eve’s decision a few lines later shows, the lure of wisdom and goodness trumps the possibility of death. Eve weighs her two options and determines that God’s threat of death is not enough to prevent her from gaining the knowledge that he already has. She concludes her speech by asking “what hinders then / To reach, and feed at once both Bodie and Mind?” (9.778-779). The word “hinders” is crucial in comprehending Eve’s impetus to finally eat the apple. Not only does it operate on a physical understanding, but it also works on a mental one. Nothing physically prevents Eve from reaching up, plucking, and consuming a piece of the tree’s fruit. Similarly, nothing mentally blocks Eve from acting on her desire and seeking the forbidden. She overcomes the two things standing in her way, namely God and her fear of death, so that she can obtain the knowledge of the fruit. Although

she does not sin until she physically bites into the apple, thereby breaking God's prime commandment, she does reject her obedience to God in degrees leading up to her moment of sin. What begins with her suggestion to work separately from Adam turns into her growing interest in the tree and ends with her dismissal of God's prohibition. When Eve consumes the apple, she is obedient to her Reason alone. God may still have power over her, since he does eject her and Adam from the garden, but he cannot command a supreme governance over her. Eve is her own leader, thanks to her God-given reasoning abilities. She takes advantage of the free will God granted her and Adam and reasons her way to the action she believes is best.

AFTER THE FALL

“The Serpent wise, / Or not restrained as wee, or not obeying, / Hath eat'n of the fruit”

(9.867-869)

After Eve eats the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the world recognizes her as a fallen woman. She directly disobeys God's commandment and does the one thing that is prohibited to her. In God's eyes, Eve's action cannot be forgotten or forgiven, since to do so would be to make it admissible for future generations to act against God. Yet Eve does not immediately feel any holy repercussions. Instead, she revels in her newfound knowledge. She may be fallen in God's mind, but she is elevated in her own. If for only a short time, Eve has both experience and independence. She is her own woman, with no guide except her own mind.

Immediately after Eve takes her fill of the apple, she speaks of her newfound knowledge. She acknowledges her prior ignorance and glories in her enlightenment. She praises the apple's gift to her, saying "Experience, next to thee I owe, / Best guide; not following thee, I had remaind / In ignorance, thou op'nst Wisdoms way" (9.807-809). Eve's reason leads her to her new guide, experience. She calls experience her "best guide," thereby leaving no room for God as her leader. She does not feel the need to listen to her maker now that she has a wealth of knowledge to direct her. She acknowledges her obedience to experience and notes how it pulled her out of her ignorant existence. Before she began "following [experience]," she was stuck with the meager bit of knowledge God gave her and Adam. She had no other option but to wait for God to present her, by way of Adam, with the information he thought fit for her to have. She "remaind / In ignorance," without any way of escaping from her restricted existence. The snake's presentation of the tree to Eve is what gives her the opportunity to escape from God's authority. Once she uses her reason to convince herself that eating the fruit is the best thing to do, she does not look back. She credits the fruit, and the experience she obtains from it, with opening "Wisdoms way." Her experience gives her knowledge and directs her actions. At this point, she feels she has all the information she needs to guide her in life. She is content to replace God with the wisdom she gains from experience.

Although Eve rather easily discounts God's authority over her, she has a harder time figuring out what to do with Adam. She is aware that God intended her to be obedient to her husband. Yet she is unsure of whether to continue to obey this hierarchy now that she has knowledge and independence. She wonders if her wisdom will "render me more equal, and

perhaps, / A thing not undesireable, sometime / Superior: for inferior who is free?"

(9.823-825). She recognizes that her obedience to Adam is a limitation to herself. She loves her husband, but she knows that she cannot be truly free if she remains subject to his command. She believes that her knowledge can bring her greater equality with Adam, whom God privileges with more information about the world. She wants to exist on the same level of understanding as her husband so that they can be truly equal partners. Her desire for equality over obedience is a direct renunciation of God's creation of the couple as "Not equal, as their sex not equal seemd" (4.296). She hopes her new intellect will make up for the inferiority that God attached to her sex. She wants to use her knowledge to overcome God's creative power. She is unhappy with his ranking of her as inferior to Adam. She wants more than she has been given and makes a conscious effort to remedy this imbalance of power.

Yet equality is not the only thing that Eve seeks to gain in her relationship with Adam. While she does look to establish herself as an equal to her husband, she also slips into her speech her desire to be "sometime / Superior." Eve's aspirations are far greater than God ever had in mind. Not only does she want to remove the inequality between her and Adam, but she also wants to be able to have the occasional upper hand in their relationship. Before the fall, Adam is the superior being, as per God's creation. After the fall, Eve temporarily gains a superior wisdom over Adam. She appreciates her increase in intellect, as it helps to satisfy her longing for fair wisdom (4.491). It allows her to exist, at a minimum, on an equal level with Adam and, at a maximum, at a level superior to Adam. Eve enjoys this freedom, since in either case she is not inferior to her husband. Inferiority, and the restriction that goes along with it, is a serious concern for Eve. As her final question in the quote above illustrates,

Eve wants to exist as a free woman and freedom is inconsistent with inferiority. She worries about reverting back to her subordinate status now that she has had a taste of the apple's wisdom.

Although this concern for equality does plague her, it does not prevent her from deciding to share the apple with Adam. It is not obedience, but love that convinces Eve to seek out her husband. Her love for Adam overpowers any desire to maintain the upper hand in their relationship. When she imagines his life without her shortly after eating of the fruit, she is horrified at the thought of being banished and replaced. She refuses to break their connection to preserve her superiority of experience, especially if it means that Adam will find himself "another Eve" (9.828). Although her fear of being outdone by a hypothetical replacement does support the idea of Eve as the jealous wife, it also speaks to her desire to maintain their relationship as soulmates. Eve is scared by the possibility that Adam will learn to love someone else just as much, or more, than he already loves her. She wants to be his only partner and will not let her disobedience get in the way of that.

She returns to him with the hope that he will share her sin and gain the forbidden knowledge. She attempts to use her reason to convince him to take the bite. She tells him how "the Serpent wise, / Or not restrain'd as wee, or not obeying, / Hath eat'n of the fruit" (9.867-869). Eve's word choice here illuminates her comprehension of the couple's power relationship with God. She expresses her frustrations about the limitations that God has imposed upon them and hopes that Adam will share her view. In her speech she gives three different reasons for the serpent's ability to consume the fruit. Her first description of the serpent as "wise" is somewhat problematic, since it potentially gives the serpent a large

amount of influence over Eve's decision to eat the apple. If his wisdom is what pushes her into sinning, then Satan really does have a significant hand in the fall. However, based upon Eve's speech prior to this moment, it does not seem that this interpretation is the most likely one. Instead, it is more probable that she refers to his speaking abilities and his wisdom in relation to other members of his species. He is wise in comparison to the other creatures. However, his wisdom is not what convinces Eve to eat the apple. He may lead her to it, but her decision to consume it in the end is all her own.

Eve's second two reasons for the serpent's action have much to do with the role of obedience in the garden. She tells Adam that the serpent is "not restrained as wee," and therefore not prohibited from eating the fruit. The serpent is not restrained on two levels. Unlike the other animals in the garden, it is not physically restrained from reaching the fruit. As it mentions to Eve earlier on in Book 9, it can slither up the tree and eat as it pleases. The serpent is not restrained by authority either. It says it received no command to stay away from the apple. Eve's statement here provides a direct contrast between the serpent's freedom and her and Adam's limitations. The serpent, who is a supposedly less powerful and less intelligent being than God's human creations, somehow has the ability to climb the tree and eat the forbidden fruit even though Eve and Adam do not. Certainly, Adam and Eve are still wiser than the serpent overall. Yet they, God's most prized creations, are still limited from the most potent source of knowledge within the garden. Eve takes issue with this restriction and hopes that Adam will too.

Eve's third and final hypothesis about why the serpent is able to eat the apple aligns most closely with her own line of reasoning. It also seems to be what most troubles Adam,

who, other than the Son, is God's most obedient being. After she says that the serpent is not as restrained as she and Adam are, she also suggests that it is "not obeying." The placement of this phrase within the poem is significant. It functions as both an afterthought to Eve's logic and as the main point of her words to Adam. In a first read through, it seems that Eve brainstorms multiple ideas about why the serpent is able to eat from the tree. The first two options take precedence in her speech while her suggestion about obedience reads like another possibility she tacks on at the end. However, it is this last option, how by "not obeying, / [the serpent] hath eat'n of the fruit" (9.868-869), that directly connects with the line about the serpent's action. Only by disobeying God could the serpent consume the fruit of the tree. This last option lingers at the end of the line and helps Eve to subtly convey to Adam her own reasons for eating the apple. When taken together then, Eve's hypotheses about the serpent seem actually to be her own reasons for breaking God's command. Not only does she desire to be wise, but she also wants to break free of God's restrictions. In the end, she sees disobedience as the only way to achieve these two things. Eating from the tree is the supreme disobedience against God. It is also the one action that gives her knowledge and freedom, the two things she can never achieve under God's direction.

Unsurprisingly, Eve's persuasion is effective and Adam willingly submits to her request to share her sinful state. Immediately after Adam eats the fruit, the couple rejoice in their new understanding and experience. They enjoy the greater knowledge that results from their disobedience of God's authority. Their sentiments change, however, once they awaken from their night of celebratory lovemaking. They begin to bicker and critique each other's actions leading up to their sin. Adam laments Eve's decision to ignore his advice and

separate from him. Eve refuses to take the blame Adam tries to place it on her and instead twists his critique into a complaint of her own.

Being as I am, why didst not thou the Head
 Command me absolutely not to go,
 Going into such danger as thou saidst?
 Too facil then thou didst not much gainsay,
 Nay, didst permit, approve, and fair dismiss.
 Hadst thou bin firm and fixt in thy dissent,
 Neither had I transgress'd, nor thou with mee. (9.1155-1161)

Eve delivers a biting critique of Adam's futile attempt to prevent her from working away from him. She places God's marital hierarchy at the center of her argument. She uses God's structure to her own benefit here in order to place the blame on Adam. She begins her speech with something of a self-deprecating comment. Yet her critique about "being as I am" serves more to remove the fault from her and redirect it to Adam. She says that he, "the Head," should have been more aware of her mentally and socially inferior state and should have prohibited her from leaving him. Calling Adam "the Head" highlights Eve's understanding of her prelapsarian obedience to him. As per God's creative decision, Adam is "the Head" of the marriage in terms of both intellect and authority. God privileges him with more information about the world and gives him control over Eve and her actions. Yet in calling him "the Head," Eve also recognizes her inseparable bond with her husband. Adam is Eve's leader only because he exists in a pair with her. Authority requires subservient figures over which one can preside. In order for Adam to have control, God had to provide him with someone over whom he could exercise his power. Adam maintains authority only because he exists in a unit with Eve. In this sense, although he does have a certain level of command, he is not fully autonomous. He needs Eve to maintain his power and continue living a happy

life. Although Eve tries to make Adam out to be the all-powerful authority in their relationship, Adam's codependence prevents him from exercising his supremacy over her.

Eve embarks down the path to sin because Adam does not have the authority to stop her. She claims that, since Adam was the more authoritative member of the pair before the fall, he should have known to "Command me absolutely not to go." Eve's word choice in this line is powerful. It suggests at once Adam's supreme power of authority and Eve's mental independence before the fall. God made Adam the superior member of the pair and the leader in their relationship. Eve notes that Adam had the power to command her to remain with him even if he did not take advantage of it. He certainly expresses his reluctance to see her leave him in that scene. Yet he never directly prohibits her from departing. His love for her blinds him and he does not think to use his authoritative power to stop her. In fact, such a command from Adam is likely the only thing that would have kept Eve from leaving. Eve is the one who comes up with the idea to work separately and the only one with a real interest in doing it. She hears Adam's preference to remain with her and yet she still pushes for her idea. Now, after the fact, Eve tells Adam that things might have been different if he had used his authority over her. She required clear direction from him in that moment. She says he should have commanded her "absolutely not to go." His absolute dictate would have left no room for her to maneuver around his authority without directly disobeying him. It does not seem likely that Eve would reject an order from Adam, since her love keeps her devoted to him. Because he never goes so far as to demand that she stay in his presence, Eve feels free to depart and explore as she pleases.

Eve emphasizes her inferior status and characterizes herself as a naive woman in need of Adam's guidance and protection. She asks him why he did not do more to prevent her from "going into such danger." Adam knew there was a dark presence in the garden, thanks to Raphael's previous warning. Yet although he does remind her of this evil, he does "not much gainsay" her desire to work alone. Admittedly, Eve skips over the fact that she argued against his warning about the foe, saying that she, the weaker of the pair, was less likely to be approached and deceived. However, she never denies her interest in leaving Adam's side. Instead, she argues that the fault has less to do with her interest and more to do with Adam's inability to command her to listen to him. Since he never issues a direct order to her, Eve interprets this as a sign of permission and approval. Without Adam's "firm and fixt" requirement that she stay with him, Eve feels free to wander off to her pleasing. She receives no obvious order and so she has nothing to obey.

While Eve makes it clear that she did not disobey Adam when she chose to work independently, she does stress the fact that they *both* disobeyed God. She forces him to take the blame with her in her final statement. She admits to her transgression against their maker, but notes that Adam has fallen with her. They have both sinned, and they must accept it. There is no turning back now. Eve wants Adam to realize that they are in this quandary together. Yet although they have both sinned and there is nothing they can do to change that, Eve suggests that Adam is at fault for setting them on the path to sin. He had the power to stop her from leaving and yet he refrained from using it. If he had demanded that she remained, she might never have encountered the serpent. Yet as soon as she meets the serpent and eats the apple, she dooms Adam to the same path. Her disobedience to God leads

to Adam's disobedience as well, since his attachment to her overpowers his tie to God. In this moment, God's authority fails because the connection he forged between Adam and Eve is too strong. Adam chooses to obey his commitment to Eve over his commitment to God. Although he and Eve have different motivations for disobeying their maker, they both disobey in the end. Eve disobeys because she desires knowledge, while Adam disobeys because he cannot bear to live without his beloved wife. They each discover something that is more valuable than their obedience to God.

However, just because Eve and Adam disobey God in favor of wisdom and companionship, respectively, they are not free from God's authority. Instead, their decision to sin against their maker only prompts him to come down more heavily upon them. He is still the supreme universal power, regardless of whether or not his creations choose to listen to him. Adam and Eve may not want to obey him after the fall, but they do not have much choice in the matter once God discovers their transgression. Through the Son, God begins by confronting Adam about his offense. Adam's response highlights Eve's influential power over her husband. He admits that "Her doing seem'd to justifie the deed" (10.142). Eve may have been designed as the inferior member of the pair, but she certainly has much influence over Adam. Her presence captivates his full attention whenever they are together. Adam cannot help but to pay attention to her and do whatever it takes to please her. In the moment Eve offers the apple, Adam knows that she has sinned and that her action was wrong. Yet in a way her action was also right, just because it was Eve who did it. In Adam's mind, Eve can do no wrong. She ate the apple and so Adam felt he had to as well, since Eve had already sinned and he could not imagine a life without her. His faith and commitment to her

overpowered his reason and his dedication to God. In the end, his only option was to follow suit.

Although Adam admits he obeyed Eve, and not God, when he ate the apple, Eve does not readily accept her own disobedience. Instead, when questioned about her crime, Eve responds, “The Serpent me beguil’d and I did eat” (10.162). When confronted by God, Eve blames her sin on the serpent. He was the one who led her down the path of sin. However, it is important to note that she says she was “beguil’d” by, and not obedient to, the serpent. Admittedly, her statement here seems like a weak excuse for her actions. She may have been directed to the tree by the serpent, but she was never tricked into eating the apple. As I found in my earlier analysis, Eve makes a free and conscious decision to consume the fruit. She is not following anyone’s command when she eats. She bites into the apple because *she* desires the knowledge it imparts. In her speech to God, then, it seems probable that she is lying about being deceived by the serpent. She downplays her understanding in that moment so as to retain her naive image and convince God of her unintentional misstep. As per God’s creative hierarchy, it is more likely for Eve to have been tricked by the serpent than for her to have consciously desired something forbidden to her. As for the excuse itself, it is significant that she chooses to say she was tricked and not that she obeyed the serpent. At no point in the poem is it clear that she sees her consumption of the apple as an act of obedience to the serpent. With her newfound knowledge, she may now recognize that the serpent was trying to tempt her. It is easier for her to say that she was drawn into the serpent’s plan than that her independent desire for knowledge happened to align with the serpent’s aims. She can feign an unwitting deception more easily than she can admit to God that she readily disobeyed him.

During the moment of judgment, God recognizes Eve and Adam's ignorance in his punishment of Satan. He says that the couple was not concerned about obtaining more knowledge before their introduction to Satan's influence. God's reasoning here seems to align exactly with what Eve hoped to achieve through her above excuse. Yet it does not prevent God from doling out a sentence to the couple. His commandment to Eve is likely the worst punishment, short of death, that he could give her. Not only is Eve cursed to painful childbirth, but God also declares, "to thy Husbands will / Thine shall submit, hee over thee shall rule" (10.195-196). With just a handful of words, God undoes all of the steps Eve has taken to gain knowledge and power. By punishing her with painful childbirth, he introduces her to the darker side of experience that he kept hidden from her and Adam in Eden. Of course, in his punishment of Satan, God also hints that Eve's "seed" will redeem them. Yet since neither Eve nor Adam pick up on this until Book 12, they are left to despair over their sentence. They must accept God's judgment and experience both the positive and negative sides of human life.

The second half of God's sentence is far worse for Eve in terms of obedience. Eve begins the poem as an inferior to both God and Adam. However, Adam's authority over her is more of a formality, since he loves her too much to restrict her. After she eats the apple, she is temporarily more independent and more knowledgeable than her husband. She is his intellectual superior for a short period of time. Once she shares the apple with Adam, however, the couple become as close to equal as they will ever be. They both have the same new understanding of the world and have committed the same crime against God. This equality does not last however. God is quick to restore Adam's superiority and emphasize

Eve's inferiority. From this point on, Eve has no other option but to be a submissive, obedient wife. God declares that Eve "shall submit" to "thy Husbands will," regardless of whether she wants to or not. Adam is the patriarchal, authoritative figure in their relationship and Eve must do as he commands. God's final statement, that "hee over thee shall rule," serves to emphasize God's punishment and make it impossible for Eve to escape from her inferiority. Adam is above Eve in the marital hierarchy. He is the one who will decide their actions and control the rest of their lives outside of Eden. In this way, God effectively puts an end to Eve's curiosity about independence and her quest for knowledge. Adam is Eve's ruler, and there is nothing she can do about it except hope that Adam will honor their marriage bond and treat her as as much of an equal as possible.

After God delivers this judgment, Eve is understandably distraught. She feels the burden of her actions and worries about her relationship with Adam. She begs him to forgive her and tells him that she is the one who should take most of the blame. Eve seems truly repentant in her speech to Adam. She values their bond, even if it is forged on inequality. She is adamant about her love for him and her regret about the whole situation. Adam realizes this and, since he cannot live without her, chooses to forgive her. Together, they lament their punishment and wonder about the struggle to follow. It is during this conversation that Eve tries one last time to find a loophole in her obedience to God. She feels the weight of the difficulty and destruction to come and looks to find a way around it. To evade future corruption and evil, Eve first suggests that they remain childless so as to prevent the sins of future generations. Yet she quickly realizes that this option is unrealistic and suggests suicide as an alternative.

In both of her suggestions, she tries to give Adam agency in bringing about these options. Even though they are her original ideas, she makes sure that Adam knows he is the one who will decide what they do. For instance, when she discusses abstinence, she tells him that they do not have to follow this plan “if thou judge it hard and difficult” (10.992). By making Adam the prime decision maker, Eve attempts to uphold her commitment to her husband. Even as she tries to escape from God’s predictions for the future, she still remains obedient to her husband. She makes sure Adam knows he has veto power in all matters. Yet she also singles him out as the weaker member in their relationship, at least in terms of sexual restraint. She may not mean to, but she does portray Adam as being less likely to abstain when it comes to lovemaking. While her assumption may be somewhat demeaning, it is also realistic. Based upon earlier passages in the poem, such as when he first lays eyes on Eve, Adam is both in love and in lust with her. He desires her body as much as he desires her companionship. Eve understands this and realizes that remaining abstinent for the rest of their lives is not a realistic option, especially considering that she desires him physically as well. She wants to be obedient to her husband and do her best to make sure he gets what he wants. Internally, she may not be content with her status as the subservient wife. Externally, however, she ensures that Adam acts as their shared authority. She makes a conscious effort to repent her sin and live out God’s commands.

She continues to stand by her husband as the moment of their banishment from Eden draws nearer. After Adam tells Eve about his communion with God at the beginning of Book 11, Eve again laments her transgression and looks toward their future life together. She expresses her sorrow about her sin and then attempts to see the bright side of their

punishment. Here too she stresses her obedience to her husband, saying, “I never from thy side henceforth to stray” (11.176). With this line, Eve simultaneously affirms her dedication to Adam and pinpoints the moment that set her on the path to sin. “Henceforth” implies her past decision to leave Adam’s presence. It was that decision that led her to the serpent and the tree. “Henceforth” also then signifies Eve’s resolution to put that moment firmly in the past so that she can move on from it. She uses this line to express her complete commitment to Adam. She recognizes that she did stray once and that that action led her down the worst path possible. She affirms that she will never do such a thing again, but will instead remain firmly fixed to Adam’s side. Only by doing this can they repair and strengthen their physical and spiritual bonds so as to become even more united in their fallen lives. They will need each other to find pleasure in their labors.

Although Eve resolves to honor her relationship with Adam regardless of what the future holds, she is overcome with grief when the archangel Michael reveals that they will have to leave Eden. As the only creature born in Eden, Eve is particularly close to the garden and the life within it. It is her place of comfort from which she draws power and inspiration. She is in control as she tends and cares for the plants. She recalls the flowers, “which I bred up with tender hand / From the first opening bud, and gave ye Names” (11.276-277). Even if Adam holds the most authority, Eve still maintains a significant amount of power within the garden. Not only does she have the strongest emotional attachment to the plant life, but she also has a certain amount of authority over it. As she says, she spent many long hours tending and watching over the young buds and blooming flowers. She was also given the responsibility of naming them, just as Adam received the power to name the animals in the

garden. Eve's ability to give the plants names is the most God-given power she ever receives. Adam has oversight over practically everything else, including Eve herself. However, in the space of the garden, Eve has control. She directs how the plants will grow and selects the names by which they will be forever known. Now, with this power stripped from her, Eve is distraught. She is being forced out of her home and left with no authority whatsoever.

To make matters worse, Michael takes it upon himself to remind her of her inferior status. He tells her not to be

Thus over-fond, on that which is not thine;
 Thy going is not lonely, with thee goes
 Thy Husband, him to follow thou art bound;
 Where he abides, think there thy native soile" (11.289-292)

Michael's words serve to drive home God's punishment for Eve. It is somewhat painful to read his admonition to her immediately following her lamentation about leaving the garden. He tells her not to be so emotional over "that which is not thine." He reminds her that as connected to the garden as she is, she does not own anything within it. Instead, she is just a temporary resident in God's paradise. She is a subject under God's command and must follow his direction without any regard to her own preferences. Not only does Michael remind Eve of her dependence upon God, but he also reaffirms her obedience to Adam. Although his statement "Thy going is not lonely" may be an attempt to comfort her, it also emphasizes the fact that Eve will never again be alone or independent. She has no choice but to follow Adam wherever he goes for the rest of her life. She is "bound" by God's word to remain by Adam's side.

The last line of Michael's admonition is particularly powerful, since it emphasizes Adam's authority and implicitly notes Eve's lack thereof. Adam has the power to create a

new home and a new life for the pair outside of Eden. Michael tells Eve that wherever Adam “abides, think there thy native soil.” In a way, Adam *is* Eve’s home. He quite literally is her “native soil,” since she was born from his rib. Adam is her point of origin and her first true home. Eden may become her home while Adam resides within it, but it is only so by extension of her husband. Adam determines Eve’s residence. Now that she is bound even more severely to his side, she must follow Adam as he finds a new home for them away from the garden. She has no other choice but to obey her husband. He is her home, and so to leave him or disobey him would make her homeless. Eve must stay with Adam, since leaving him would mean leaving a part of herself behind. She has to obey him because he is her home, her soul-mate, and her authority under God. Disobedience is no longer an option for her.

With this in mind, Eve tries to make the most of what she has been given. She accepts her punishment and resolves to live according to God’s direction. She places Adam at her center of focus and makes clear in her final speech that she will remain committed to him for the rest of their lives. When Adam goes to prepare her for their departure, she reassures him that she is ready for whatever the future will bring.

...but now lead on;
 In mee is no delay; with thee to goe,
 Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
 Is to go hence unwilling; thou to mee
 Art all things under Heav’n, all places thou
 Who for my wilful crime art banisht hence. (12.614-619)

Throughout this passage, Eve emphasizes Adam’s role as guide for them both. He is the one who will direct them out of Eden and onto their new life. Although Eve is distraught about leaving her comfort zone, she relies upon her bond with Adam to motivate her. Her speech plays an interesting role in the discussion about obedience. While Adam is clearly her

superior in terms of power, he is also her husband. Because of this, it is not obvious whether Eve chooses to obey Adam because she was commanded to do so, because she loves and respects him, or as a result of some combination of these two options. Both of these possibilities do seem like reasonable explanations. Eve cannot disobey her husband now that God has reprimanded her. Furthermore, not only does she regret her sin and want to make amends for it, but she also wants to remain with Adam. To sin again would likely mean death and separation from her husband, something which is too great a risk for Eve to take.

Whether out of love or duty, or both, Eve bids Adam to “lead on” so that they can begin their lives as fallen beings. Her acceptance and readiness for their departure is a marked development from her lamentation in Book 11. She tells Adam that “In mee is no delay.” Eve has put aside all her reservations about leaving the garden. She knows which bonds are most important to honor. In this section, she strongly resembles the biblical character Ruth. Like Ruth, who chose to follow her mother-in-law into a foreign land, Eve resolves to stand by Adam as they set forth into the world. Both women exhibit serious levels of commitment to their superiors out of respect for them. Eve loves Adam, and so she understands that she must obey God and her husband and accept the punishment for her sin.

Following Eve’s declaration of resolve to follow her husband out of the garden, her next few lines connect with the message Michael relays to her in Book 11 about making Adam the focus of her life. She assures Adam that “with thee to goe, / is to stay here.” Since “here” is home, and since Adam defines where she calls home, this makes sense. Eve will willingly follow Adam out of Eden because she has no home without him. She recognizes that, regardless of his superiority over her, she could never live without him. She follows up

her statement with another, similar message, saying, “without thee here to stay, / Is to go hence unwilling.” Eve cannot bear to be apart from her husband. Her state of mind here is in clear contrast with her desire to work away from Adam in Book 9. Eve is aware of the events that led to her sin and seems to make a conscious attempt to distance herself from any similar actions. She is now the perfect embodiment of the loving, submissive wife. Even though she loved and cared for Adam before the fall, she allowed her own longing for knowledge and independence to get in the way of her commitment to her husband. Now, as she prepares to leave Eden once and for all, she portrays herself as the fully obedient wife, ready to do whatever her husband commands. She even goes so far as to say that she does not want to remain in Eden if Adam is not there. He means more to her than the garden ever will. She needs him in her life and is willing to follow him anywhere, even if that means leaving the only place she has ever known.

Because of this, it seems that her impetus for leaving Eden has less to do with her commitment to be obedient to her husband and more to do with her desire to uphold their marital bond. Throughout the entire poem, Eve and Adam’s connection holds a serious weight, so much so that they sometimes prioritize it over their obedience to God. Eve’s love for her husband is what prompts her to offer him the apple, just as his love for her is what convinces him to accept it. Not only do they share an intrinsic link, as a result of Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib, but they also have a deep emotional connection that makes it near impossible for them to remain apart for long. With this in mind, Eve’s resolve in this speech seems to be primarily motivated by her dedication to Adam. Although she also fulfills the requirement of marital obedience that God demands of her, she does so only secondarily. Her

bond with Adam is her primary concern, as evidenced by her line “thou to mee / Art all things under Heav’n.” According to this quote, Adam is everything to her. Eve’s words may be rather romantic, but the sentiment behind them is genuine. A life with Adam is her motivation for continuing to live. He is the center of her world and the most important thing to her on earth. While her poetic sentiments do attribute to Adam a significant amount of power, they do so in more of a loving than an authoritative way. Eve follows Adam because, to her, he is “all things under Heav’n.” She will obey Adam because God demands it, but she will also do it out of love for her husband. She may not be above obedience to God, but she does not let this requirement define the motivation behind her actions. Her words “to mee” are important here, since they signify how Adam’s earthly supremacy has more to do with Eve’s perspective and relationship to him than anything else. She loves him so much that she centers her whole life around him. Nothing else on earth will ever be as important to Eve as Adam is.

Not only does Adam embody all things, but he also is something of an omnipresent figure in Eve’s mind. She follows up her description of Adam as her everything with another about how he is “all places.” Adam’s power in these lines draws a parallel with God’s own control. To Eve, Adam dominates every place and everything on Earth just as God does in Heaven. As God’s first creation, Adam is the earthly authority. The significance Eve places upon Adam resembles her pre-fall understanding of him. The only difference now is that, through her new wisdom and God’s punishment, Eve prioritizes Adam as her sole focus. She is obedient to nothing and no one except her husband. Once they depart from Eden, he will be the only familiar thing that remains to her. Her acceptance of her husband as her leader is

probably for the best then, not only because God commands it, but also because she herself prioritizes him as her partner and guide in life. Eve obeys Adam out of respect and love, and not just because God requires it of her.

Yet in the end, her sin still weighs heavily on her mind. Her last speech in all of *Paradise Lost* returns her to the moment of her crime. After assuring Adam that she is ready to leave and that she will remain devoted to him as they begin their new life together, she brings up their fall once more. She praises Adam as her reason for being and then recalls how he, “who for my wilful crime art banisht hence” (12.619). Eve’s recollection of her past disobedience serves as a reminder of her required future obedience. It is as if she feels she owes it to Adam to do whatever it takes to make things up to him. She blames herself for their “crime” and sees Adam as a casualty of her decision. Eve takes full responsibility for the fall at this point. She declares her consumption of the apple to be “my wilful crime.” By claiming the crime as her own, she also admits to having done it willfully. This is a direct negation of her earlier statement that the serpent tempted her into sinning (10.162). She knows that she consciously disobeyed God’s rule. Only in her last speaking scene does she finally acknowledge her cognizance of her transgression. Eve admits to herself, to Adam, and to God that she is the one who chose to sin in that moment. She does not mention the serpent at all. She admits to her attempted defiance and acknowledges her fault in the repercussions that followed. She disobeyed once, and now she will obey Adam and God completely for the rest of her life. In this way, her postlapsarian obedience is more valuable than her prelapsarian obedience. Not only has she learned the value of remaining obedient to her

maker and her husband, but she has also become more devoted to Adam as her guide and her partner.

By the time she and Adam leave Eden once and for all, Eve is resigned to be forever obedient to her maker and her husband. Yet she is also more committed to Adam than ever, as their departure “hand in hand” illuminates (12.648). Although Eve’s sin forces her to leave her beloved paradise forever, it also brings her closer to her husband. She and Adam exhibit a much stronger mental, emotional, and physical bond after the fall than they ever do before it. As a result of this, Eve is also more obedient to Adam than ever. She follows Adam because she loves him and wants to please him. She has come a long way since her introduction to the poem in Book 4. She is no longer the naive, curious woman who desires more than she has been given. Instead, she is now both experienced in the ways of the world and fallen from God’s favor. Her disobedience leads to a lifelong struggle to redeem herself. God places a heavy burden on her in the form of the knowledge of the evils her future generations will cause leading up to their redemption by the Son of God. Yet her disobedience also teaches her to appreciate what she has. Eve values Adam even more after the fall, especially when she fears being separated from him. She vows to remain obedient and steadfast to him for the remainder of her days.

Even though Eve *is* forced into the role of the obedient wife, her sentence is not as dreadful as it initially appears. After all is said and done, Eve gets exactly what she wanted at the start of the poem. Not only does she have a greater amount of knowledge, but she also connects with her husband on an even more meaningful level. By eating the apple, Eve satisfies her curiosity and gains an understanding of the ways of the world that were

previously hidden to her. She also confirms herself as the sole, irreplaceable object of Adam's love and desire. Her fear of being replaced by another Eve is unnecessary now that she and Adam have been banished from the garden. As the only two humans on the planet, she and Adam need each other to survive, find comfort, and ensure the continuation of humankind. So although God requires Eve to obey Adam, his punishment does not seem like much of a punishment at all. It is true that the pair must leave Eden, thereby leaving behind the comfort of home. Yet since they find a home in each other (12.614-616), this loss is not as severe as it initially sounds. In all, Eve's obedience to Adam is far less of a penalty than she first makes it out to be. Although Adam does have the power to command Eve, it seems unlikely that he will make much use of it based upon his past behavior. He loves her too much to require her to do anything against her will. In the end, Eve becomes more of an equal to Adam than ever. They leave the garden together with the same level of universal wisdom and the same level of inexperience regarding the new world. With only each other to rely upon, Eve and Adam are partners in the truest sense. As a result of the fall, their bonds of knowledge, love, and experience become unbreakable and eternal. They get a new start.

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