Milton's Eve and the Other Eves

Dudley R. Hutcherson

University of Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/ms_studies_eng

Part of the Literature in English, British Isles Commons

Recommended Citation
Hutcherson, Dudley R. (1960) "Milton's Eve and the Other Eves," Studies in English: Vol. 1, Article 5. Available at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/ms_studies_eng/vol1/iss1/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Studies in English by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.
Eve of Paradise Lost is one of the greatest women of literature, magnificent, feminine, human, and a masterpiece of psychological characterization. Is she Milton’s creation, or was she inherited almost entirely from the tradition? By what means does Milton achieve Eve’s portrait, and does it surpass that by any other writer?

The reason for Eve Milton accepted from Genesis: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” In Tetrachordon Milton had written “that there is a peculiar comfort in the married state besides the genial bed, which no other society affords.”¹ He expresses this purpose again in De Doctrina Christiana: “God gave a wife to man at the beginning that she should be his help and solace and delight.”² Paradise Lost differs from Genesis, however, in that it is Adam, not God, who first states Adam’s need for a mate. This variation was not original. Milton had read in Rashi’s commentary in the Bomberg Bible that Adam, observing the animals, male and female, had lamented “for all of them there is a help meet, but for me there is no help meet.”³

The physical loveliness of Milton’s Eve was in part an inheritance from many women, some of whom had been called Eve. The poet’s recollections of the glorious women of mythology contributed to her creation. Milton compares Eve by direct or indirect allusion with Juno, Pandora, Aphrodite, Hera, Athena, a wood nymph, an oread or
dryad, Delia, Pales, Pomona, and Ceres. Twenty-seven other women or groups of women from mythology are also mentioned in *Paradise Lost*, but not in connection with Eve. That there are in Milton’s poetry before *Paradise Lost* 225 references to the women of mythology also suggests that the poet’s conception of feminine appearance and character would be affected by his knowledge of the women in Greek and Roman legends. In Homer and the Homeric hymns there is, however, very little physical description of women. Their beauty is conveyed mainly by epithet and incident. From these sources Milton did not derive the details of Eve’s loveliness, but he could have learned the method of presenting feminine beauty by general means rather than in specific terms, a technique appropriate to the epic.

In *Genesis* the woman is not described. Jewish tradition praises Eve’s “surprising beauty and grace,” but only after it has been stressed that “Eve was but as an ape compared with Adam.” Avitus, a major influence in the tradition whom Milton almost certainly had read, has Satan describe Eve as the most beautiful maiden and the ornament of all the world, but the author adds that Eve unjustly accepts these compliments. The Eve of *Genesis B* of the Caedmon poems is the “loveliest of women” and “the lovely maid, fairest of women.” Although Junius, to whom Bishop Ussher gave the Caedmon manuscript, lived in London until 1651, there is no evidence that Milton knew these poems; nowhere does Milton indicate an interest in any Old English literature. Some Renaissance commentators questioned whether Woman was made in the image of God, but Pererius, Pareus, and others agreed that she wore God’s image, although she was much less like him than was Adam.

Spenser’s influence on *Paradise Lost* is for the most part general rather than specific, but it has been suggested that one direct association may be in Adam’s description to Raphael of his vision of Eve in which Milton may have recalled King Arthur’s account of his dream of the “royall maid” who beside him

*Her dainty limbes full softly down did lay:
So faire a creature yet saw never sunny day.*

Lavish praise of Eve’s appearance is found in the treatments of the Creation and Fall in late sixteenth and in seventeenth century
Milton's Eve and the Other Eves

writing. Milton read in Joshua Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas that Eve possessed all of Adam's beauty and could scarcely have been distinguished from him:

Saving that she had a more smiling Eye,
A smoother Chin, a cheek of purer Dye,
A fainter Voyce, a more inticing Face,
A deeper Tress, a more delighting Grace,
And in her Bosom (more than Lillie-White)
Two swelling Mounts of Ivory, panting Light.\(^{10}\)

The young poet who visited in Paris the famous Hugo Grotius, the Dutch ambassador to France, certainly must have read the great man's *Adamus Exul* in which the Earth and Adam admire Eve's preeminent beauty.\(^{11}\) Milton probably knew also Andeini's *L'Adamo*, published in 1613; in this work Eve is celebrated as sole joy of the world and man's delight, and is, according to the disguised Lucifer, a fair maiden who dazzles all eyes, and the noblest ornament of the world.\(^{12}\) Peyton's *Glasse of Time* praised Eve's "glorious beauty chaste."\(^{13}\) If Milton read or had read to him Joseph Beaumont's *Psyche or Love's Mystery*, printed in 1648, he found in it a much more detailed description of Eve's physical qualities than he attempted in *Paradise Lost*. Beaumont praises her as "Topstone of the goodly-fram'd Creation," "The Crown of Nature," and "that final Creature."\(^{14}\) He then devotes thirteen six-line stanzas to the account in sensuous detail of Eve's beauty. "Symmetry rejoym'd in every Part," the poet declares in conclusion:

From heav'n to earth, from head to foot I mean,
No Blemish could by Envy's self be seen.

In Salandra's *Adamo Caduto*, published in 1647, Adam recites the superiority of the parts of Eve's body to various objects of natural beauty. He declares also that if he did not know Eve had been made from his flesh, her beauty would convince him that she was a goddess, and that she is a heaven more lovely than heaven itself.\(^{15}\)

What paintings and sculpture of Eve Milton had seen, and whether he recalled these works as he created his heroine can be only speculation. The young English visitor in Florence must have admired, though, Ghiberti's bronze doors on the Baptistery of San
Giovanni on which the first of the ten masterpieces of relief sculpture depicts the creation of Adam and Eve, the temptation, and the expulsion. It would seem likely also that in Bologna Milton saw "The Sin of Adam and Eve" by Jacopo della Querica on the main portal of S. Petronio. Certainly in Rome he would have been taken by his friends to view Michelangelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel. Eve's physical qualities may have been affected also by the poet's recollections of paintings and statues of other lovely women.

What part, if any, the girls from Milton's youth or from his youthful imagination had in the creation of Eve is also speculation. Against the screen of his blindness the poet may have seen again at times the "virgin groups" of Elegy I, the girl supreme above the rest of Elegy VII, and the dark Emilia of the Italian sonnets. He may have been stirred also by the recollection of the sensuousness of Elegy V.

No one knows, either, what was contributed by Milton's three wives to the lovely Eve. Her body is warm and soft, with a reality that a man could scarcely know but through experience.

Milton's Eve has a rare physical beauty, clothed in great poetry, whatever the sources of her being in the poet's reading or in his experience. It is not that certain other writers had not shown an equal interest in Eve's physical magnificence; a number of other authors actually give much more attention to the details of Eve's body than does Milton. The effect that Milton achieves is, however, unequalled. God calls her "fair Eve," and Milton, "the fairest of her Daughters Eve," using the same term or its superlative many times.

She as a vail down to the slender waste
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishev'l'd,

and in the embrace,

half her swelling Breast
Naked met his under the flowing Gold
Of her loose tresses hid.

Not for the most part through such details as these, however, for other specific details do not occur, is Milton uniquely successful. Instead, by a fortuitous combination of general terms he evokes a vision
Milton's Eve and the Other Eves

of supreme loveliness. The creation is the result of a dozen-odd passages woven into the narrative, and if all these lines are brought together, the reader understands, as perhaps he had only felt before, the impact of

Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
And in her self compleat.

Milton also achieves as no other writer a sense of the glory of Eve's nakedness:

Undeckt, save with her self, more lovely fair
Than Wood-Nymph, or the fairest Goddess feign'd
Of three that in Mount Ida naked strove.

So lovely was she as at table she "minsterd naked" that
if ever, then,

Then had the Sons of God excuse to have bin
Enamour'd at that sight.

Of Eve's character and her relationship with Adam before the Fall, Milton learned from Genesis that she was made to be a help meet, that man and wife shall be one flesh, and that she, like Adam, was unashamed of her nakedness. Milton's debt to the Narcissus story for Eve's first experience and the similarity of her willfulness to Dido's have been suggested. Early hexameral literature added little to the portrait of Eve in Genesis. According to Jewish legend, after Lilith deserted Adam, he was given Eve as a "true companion," but he perceived also that she would try to gain her desires by entreaty and tears, or flattery and caresses, and he concluded, "this is my never-silent bell." Rashi explains that the term help meet, which Milton also discussed in Tetrachordon, "(literally help-as-over-against him) . . . means if he is lucky a help; if unlucky, an antagonist with whom to fight." Rashi also interpreted Genesis to mean that the man, who is to subdue and dominate the female, is commanded to be fruitful and multiply, and not the woman. Philo of Alexandria advanced the view that as soon as Eve was made, Adam's life became blameworthy. Avitus does not depict Eve before the temptation, but as soon as the serpent approaches her, she immediately reveals her credulousness and her ambitions. Eve of the Caedmonian Genesis B lacks the majesty of Milton's figure, but in other attributes she is
perhaps the most attractive and appealing characterization before *Paradise Lost*.

The reason for Eve’s existence — and for the existence of women — was strongly argued in the commentaries of the Renaissance, whether she was created merely as a reproductive machine or whether she was made primarily for a help meet and companion.\(^{22}\) In support of the latter view, Pareus, whose definition of marriage as “an indis- soluble conjunction of one man and one woman to an individual and intimate conversation and mutual benevolence” Milton quotes in *Tetrachordon*, named five ways in which woman helps man. The Renaissance commentators were in agreement that Eve had a soul, but they were uncertain where this soul came from. They also stressed that Eve understood and happily accepted her subordination to Adam.

In Sylvester’s translation of Du Bartas, Milton had read that the “Queen of the World” “so purely kept her Vow of chastity” that except only “in fained form” Satan “in vain should tempt her Constancy,”\(^{23}\) and then the apparently contradictory statement that Satan assaults:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The part he finds in evident defaults:} \\
\text{Namely, poor Woman, wavering, weak, unwise,} \\
\text{Light, credulous, given to lies.}\(^{24}\)
\end{align*}
\]

In *Adamus Exul* Satan describes woman as light-minded, disobedient, variable, prideful, self-indulgent, selfish, curious, and restless.\(^{25}\) Eve in her conversation with Adam seems, however, very sincere and humbly concerned for her husband’s happiness as her chief pleasure. As soon as Andreini’s Adam saw Eve, he praised her as his beloved companion.\(^{26}\) Thomas Peyton states that God had provided Adam with “so choice a mate” and “ring’d her with virtue, glorious beauty chaste.”\(^{27}\) In Salandra’s *Adamo Caduto* God tells Adam that Eve is his help meet and like him, not in sex, but in soul, although later Eve seems frivolous and imperfect.\(^{28}\) Beaumont is as expansive in praise of Eve’s other qualities as of her beauty.\(^{29}\) Pordage describes Adam’s great joy in Eve.\(^{30}\) Vondel’s Eve is praised in superlative terms by Gabriel and Adam, and she appears a lively, intelligent, and devoted mate; yet Asmodeus and Lucifer decide to assail her because she is weaker than Adam and is vulnerable because of her love of dainties.\(^{31}\) There
is no evidence of the direct influence of Shakespeare’s heroines, but it has been said “that Eve in her infinite variety, suggests Desdemona and Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra.”

Thus it appears that the basic qualities of Eve before the Temptation that Milton used are found in the tradition. Milton developed these elements into a living personality, but representative of humanity, with the attributes of attractive perfection, yet warm, soft, human, clothed in the magic of his language, so that she stands apart from and far above the line from which she is descended. Milton’s Eve is the epitome of “sweet attractive grace,” whose cheek is altered by “no thought infirm.” Adam describes to the Angel his great delight in Eve’s “graceful acts,/ Those thousand decencies that daily flow/ From all her words and actions mixed with Love/ And sweet compliance.” Adam later was to remember her as “last and best/ Of all Gods works in whom excell’d/ Whatever can to sight or thought be form’d,/ Holy, divine, good, amiable or sweet!” Both understood their relationship: “Hee for God only, shee for God in him.” For Adam, though, she was “Heav’ns last best gift, my ever new delight,” “Best Image of my self and deareer half,” and “Sole partner and sole part of all these joyes/ Dearer thy self then all . . .”

Eve’s physical relations with Adam before the Fall have been the subject of much speculation. Genesis makes no statement about the matter, unless Rashi’s comment on the first verse of Chapter Four is accepted: “and the man knew his wife. . . . Before he had sinned and had been banished from the Garden of Eden, even then had conception and birth [begun].” In some legends of the Jews, God dressed Eve for the wedding, and the angels played music and danced afterwards, but nothing is said about the consummation. Baldwin found no Christian authority for Satan’s lust toward Eve nor for his envy of Adam’s marital life; these ideas he discovered, however, in Josephus, the Apocalypsis Mosis, Beresith Rabbi, and other rabbis, along with insistence on the blamelessness of sexual life before the Fall. Baldwin also noted often in midrashic tradition the notion that Adam became aware of the sexual instinct at his first sight of Eve. Philo states that the love which arose immediately between Adam and Eve led to the desire to produce their kind, which in turn led to bodily pleasure, and
the beginning of wrong.\textsuperscript{36} Avitus tells of Adam and Eve's marriage, and states that Paradise was their bridal chamber, but turns immediately to a description of Paradise.\textsuperscript{37} Saint Augustine takes an emphatic position: "But that blessing of marriage, for increase, multiplication, and peopling of the earth . . . was given them before sin that they might know the procreation of children belonged to the glory of marriage and not to the punishment of sin."\textsuperscript{38} Augustine is equally insistent that although there were physical relations before the Fall, "their wedlock love was holy and honest," and they did not know lust.\textsuperscript{39} Williams found in the Renaissance expositions a strong tradition that Eve and Adam were virgins before the Fall.\textsuperscript{40} The Protestants opposed much more strongly than the Catholics, although some advanced Catholics agreed with them, the theory that Eve and Adam would have remained virgins if they had not sinned. The discussion, it will be noted, was whether there would ever have been conjugal relations. Only one or two Renaissance commentators accepted the possibility of love-making before the Fall. One common argument against a consummation was that of a lack of time.\textsuperscript{41}

In Grotius, Eve and Adam talk of sharing their common love and rapture, but their language is not specific.\textsuperscript{42} Andreini's Adam invites Eve to the purest, closest embraces; at Eve's suggestion they kneel to praise God, however, and the scene ends.\textsuperscript{43} Eve and Adam's great beauty and God's command to multiply their kind are given by Lyndesay as the reasons they were not celibate before their sin.\textsuperscript{44} Beaumont writes:

\begin{quote}
Nor did their amorous hands and lips alone
In most unspotted Pleasure juncture wed,
But in a nearer dearer union
Their Thoughts all kiss'd, their Hearts were married.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

Milton, it is then evident, had authority in the tradition for his presentation of the marital relations of Eve and Adam before the Fall, although many writers had argued for celibacy or had ignored the matter. Milton's unique contribution is again not in the originality of the idea, but in the beauty of his poetry, in the effectiveness of his scene, and in the surpassing physical glory of his Eve. The two scenes of Adam and Eve's love-making, from which Satan turned in envy —
Milton's Eve and the Other Eves

A reaction occasionally found also in the tradition — and of the "Rites/ Mysterious" with the apostrophe to wedded love, are anticipated but unmatched among Milton's predecessors.

Milton's dream temptation has no model in the literature of the tradition. Apparently from his imagination and from his knowledge of the human mind the poet fashioned the episode. In a few other versions Satan approaches Eve some time before he makes clear that he wants her to eat the fruit, but nothing occurs that resembles Milton's psychological probing of Eve's potential weakness. There is in the literature no antecedent either of the highly realistic love scene for which Eve's frightened awakening from her dream provides the opportunity. Eve enjoys on this occasion the attentions of a skilled lover. Although by Milton's own confession he was very naive in this aspect of life when he brought Mary Powell to London, he had learned much in the intervening years.

The first real interest in Eve in many versions of the tradition is at the beginning of the temptation, and nearly all who retold the story are much concerned with the woman's qualities that attracted the Tempter and with the manner of Satan's approach. In Genesis no stage is set for the Serpent's encounter with the woman, nor is any reason given for his choice of Eve unless the statement of the Serpent's precedence in subtlety implies that this attribute leads him to approach Eve rather than her husband. In Vitae Adae et Evae and in Apocalypsis Mosis, Adam on his deathbed recalled that the Adversary had assailed Eve when she was away from her husband. Jewish legend and rabbinical tradition explain that the Serpent chose Eve because he knew that woman is easily beguiled. Yosippon has the Serpent make a casual, conversational approach to Eve in the manner that Milton also employs but with more detail. Yosippon, the Apocalypsis Mosis, Beresith Rabbi, and Rashi, among others, state that Satan was motivated by his jealousy of Adam's conjugal relations with Eve. Philo explains that Eve's mind was devoid of steadfastness and firm foundation. The Serpent in Avitus, afraid that he could not tempt Adam, subtly and with soft words gains easily an audience with Eve. That Satan knew that Eve was weaker and an easier
victim is found also in Peter Lombard, Hugo, Ainsworth, Bonaventure, Calvin, Grotius, Heywood, Mercer, Pererius, and Purchas.62

Satan in the Caedmon Genesis B assumes the guise of an angelic messenger who first approaches and is rejected by Adam. In great wrath Satan turns to Eve, whose soul had been made weaker, and whom he finds alone, and tells her God will be angry if he hears that she refused the command brought by his messenger to eat the fruit.58 Eve’s deception, and sympathetic portrayal, through her understandable credulity in believing that she has been approached by God’s messenger has no Biblical authority, but it is not uncommon in apocryphal literature.54 However much Milton knew these versions, he did not find their approach suitable to his story.

Eve’s weakness or her credulity was given by most of Milton’s immediate predecessors and by his contemporaries as the reason for her selection for the temptation. Milton read in Sylvester’s translation of Du Bartas that Satan in serpent form assaulted the part of humanity he found in default, “namely, poor Woman, waver, weak, unwise,/ Light, credulous, given to lies.”55 After Satan has been contemptuously rejected by Adam in Adamus Exul, he transforms himself into a beautiful serpent and approaches Eve when she is alone.56 Beaumont’s Satan, in serpent form, notes Eve’s “soft Temper” and thinks she “might less impregnable than Adam be.”57 Lucifer, in serpent guise, in L’Adamo tells Eve that he is the gardener named “Wisdom,” although he is sometimes called “Life.”58 Asmodeus in Adam in Ballingschaf advises Satan to tempt Eve first because she is the weaker of the two and will be undone by her love of dainties.59 Some accounts have Satan find Eve alone, without explanation of Adam’s whereabouts. Salandra, however, causes Echo to lure the man away in a futile search,60 and Vondel sends Adam to pray and to speak with God in solitude.61

Milton’s contribution to this part of the story is the separation scene. In no other account is there anything comparable to the masterful dialogue of Paradise Lost in which Adam’s logic and loving care are skillfully overcome by Eve’s attractive willfulness and feminine guile.

In several other temptation scenes Satan addresses Eve in a man-
ner similar to the magnificent epithets he employs in Milton’s story. Avitus,\(^{62}\) Ramsey,\(^{63}\) Beaumont,\(^{64}\) and Pordage\(^{65}\) are among the writers whose Tempter approached Eve with flattering titles and compliments. In *L’Adamo\(^{66}\)* and in *Adam in Ballingschak\(^{67}\)* the serpent’s tribute to Eve is very profuse. Here again Milton’s individuality is not in an original device, but in the beauty of his poetry. Milton’s Satan also skillfully weaves the magnificent terms which are almost but not quite true, into the entire temptation, obtaining a total effect not found elsewhere. Eve’s curiosity about the fact that the Serpent is speaking is common to Milton and many other accounts.

It is difficult for many readers of *Paradise Lost* to understand how the perfect Eve has become so naive and credulous that she can be persuaded by the Serpent to follow his joyous convolutions without realizing that he is leading her toward the forbidden tree. Milton tries to make gradual and reasonable Eve’s action, although the effort may not be convincing. In the tradition, though, the Serpent usually made his proposal immediately and bluntly, although often Eve did not know the Serpent’s identity.

In *Genesis* the Serpent tells Eve that she and Adam will not die, but that their eyes will be opened and they will become as gods. In Jewish legend,\(^{68}\) Yosippon,\(^{69}\) Avitus,\(^{70}\) Peyton,\(^{71}\) Pordage,\(^{72}\) Quarles’ *Emblems,\(^{73}\)* and Salandra,\(^{74}\) among other accounts, Eve either is told she will not die, or the Serpent points out that he has touched the fruit and is not dead. Eve and Adam will become as gods after they have eaten the fruit, the Serpent tells her in many accounts, including the *Apocalypsis Mosis,\(^{75}\)* Jewish legend,\(^{76}\) Avitus,\(^{77}\) *Cursor Mundi,\(^{78}\)* the Coventry,\(^{79}\) Chester,\(^{80}\) and York plays,\(^{81}\) *Adamus Exul,\(^{82}\)* *L’Adamo,\(^{83}\)* *The Monarch*,\(^{84}\) the *Glasse of Time,\(^{85}\)* *Adam in Ballingschak,\(^{86}\)* *Mundorum Explicato,\(^{87}\)* and *Adamo Caduto.\(^{88}\)* That the fruit will enable Eve and her husband to know good and evil is an argument used often, for example in *Apocalypsis Mosis,\(^{89}\)* Philo,\(^{90}\) and Grotius.\(^{91}\) In Jewish legend the Tempter declares that God was prompted by malevolence.\(^{92}\) Yosippon’s Serpent states that God was jealous because the fruit would enable Eve and Adam to create worlds.\(^{93}\) The Serpent of Grotius tells Eve that Fate controls everything and that whether she eats the fruit will not determine her death.\(^{94}\) andreini’s Serpent
says that if they eat, he will gain revenge on God, and that also when they become gods, he will have the garden for himself. Du Bartas presents a series of arguments similar to those in Milton. Thus, in one story or another the other Eves had been persuaded by the same arguments that Milton’s Serpent employs. No other single Eve had listened, however, to the effective, powerful — and apparently logical — presentation of all the arguments offered in *Paradise Lost*. Milton is original here, not in what Satan says, but in the organization and force of his persuasion. If we ignore the puzzling question of how a perfect Eve could have been subject to Satan’s wiles, it is easy to believe that Satan’s arguments were too strong for anyone, but especially for a naive and inexperienced young woman.

Eve succumbs immediately to Satan’s proposal in some accounts, but in others, as in *Paradise Lost*, she considers her action. Yosippon’s Eve decides that Adam had not told her the truth, and, as in the *Zohar* and *Paradise Lost*, she indulges in a soliloquy before she eats. Renaissance commentators analyzed Eve’s mental reactions in terms of elaborate spiritual psychology of the state of the soul in relation to sin and virtue. In Sylvester’s translation of Du Bartas Milton read that before the fatal step was taken,

— doth Eve shew by like fearfull fashions
The doubtfull combat of contending Passions;
She would, she should not; glad, sad, comes and goes.

In *Adamus Exul* Eve’s rebuttals grow weaker with each reply to Satan, and after a long soliloquy she succumbs. The similarity of Hamlet’s soliloquy to Eve’s meditation in *Paradise Lost* was suggested by Professor Thaler. The brief but sprightly dialogus of Quarles’ emblem presents an Eve who decides that the fruit is nothing but an apple, and that it is no worse to do something than to want to do it. Beaumont’s Eve “thrice step’d to the enchanting Tree,/ As oft her Conscience pluck’d her back again” until at last “with uncheck’d Madness” she rushed to the fruit. Eve in *Adamo Caduto* questions the Serpent’s arguments point by point, but she is persuaded to touch the fruit; then, after placing it against her breast does not bring the changes she had been promised, she eats it.

Milton recognizes and skillfully uses the opportunities offered by
the act of Eve’s eating the fruit. In nearly all accounts, as in *Genesis*, 
Caedmon, Du Bartas, Grotius, and Andreini, the writer states merely 
that Eve eats the fruit. Avitus does declare that she devours it 
greedily, and Beaumont states that she rushes to the tree with 
“uncheck’d Madness.” Milton’s picture of Eve as “Greedly she 
ingorg’d without restraint” until “satiate at length,/ And hight’nd 
as with Wine, jocond and boon,” concisely depicts the startling change 
in her character and prepares for her temptation of Adam and its 
aftermath.

*Genesis* does not consider Eve’s motives in persuading Adam to eat 
the fruit, except perhaps for the implication that she believed that the 
qualities and promises which drew her to the tree would be equally 
attractive to Adam. Eve’s fear that she will die and Adam will be 
given another wife is the prime motive, as it is in *Paradise Lost*, in 
many accounts, for example, in the legends of the Jews, in the 
‘Zohar in which Saurat found a striking resemblance to *Paradise Lost* 
in the scene after Eve eats the apple, in *Yosippon*, in Rashi, and in several Renaissance commentators. The Tempter in the 
Caedmon poem tells Eve she has been made more beautifully splendid 
and under this deception she goes to Adam. Du Bartas sends her 
forthwith to Adam, apparently without thought of motive. Salandra’s Eve indulges in a long soliloquy, blaming herself, but also 
Adam for leaving her alone, and decides that Adam should share 
her fate.

Du Bartas treats Eve’s temptation of Adam concisely, stating that 
Eve “cunningly” added to the qualities of the fruit “her quaint smiling 
glances/ Her witty speech, and pretty countenances.” Before Eve 
took the fruit to Adam she covered herself with fig leaves, according 
to the *Book of Jubilees*, and with a girdle of the plant of which 
she had eaten, according to the *Apocalypse Mosis*. The legends of 
the Jews describe Eve’s use of tears and lamentations to persuade 
Adam to eat, and state that she also gave the fruit to all other living 
creatures so that they too might be subject to death. Saint Augustin- 
tine comments that Eve was deceived by the Serpent, but that Adam, 
although he was aware of the deception, yielded because of his social 
love for Eve. The Eve of the Caedmon poems, having believed that
Satan is God's messenger who if she eats will not tell God that Adam refused to eat, with good intentions finally persuades Adam to eat.\textsuperscript{120} The Adam of Grotius is as greatly shocked as Milton's when he learns of Eve's act, but his alarm and despair are less dramatically effective.\textsuperscript{121} Adam, as Eve pleads, debates his choice between love of God and of the woman; he decides that God has willed that love of woman is stronger, and accepts the fruit. In \textit{L'Adamo} Adam is torn for a few minutes between the desire to obey God and the desire not to lose Eve, but shortly he makes the inevitable choice.\textsuperscript{122} Lyndesay's Adam is overcome by woman despite his intelligence, as, it is remarked, many men have been overcome.\textsuperscript{123} Adam in \textit{Psyche or Love's Mystery} is astonished and frightened, but accepts the fruit because he is unwilling to risk Eve's loss.\textsuperscript{124}

Salandra presents an attractive scene, if the events are accepted as without universal significance, in which Eve tries to obtain reassurance of Adam's love before she admits her deed.\textsuperscript{125} When Adam learns of her act, despite all her wiles he refuses to eat. Finally, he pretends to eat, but Eve is not amused. Eve threatens suicide, and Adams eats. The scene in Vondel is also attractive, but the playwright, like Salandra, seems to be concerned only with a domestic quarrel.\textsuperscript{126}

Milton's Eve in her temptation of Adam is again superior to her predecessors. Skillfully and quickly she leads Adam to justify what he will do. She has sought this new happiness and this approach to equality with God for Adam's sake, she tells him, and now she would share everything with him. She closes her appeal with emphasis on their great love. As Adam recovers from his astonishment and horror, his first thought is that he cannot lose this lovely and congenial creature, not even for God and with the certainty of another woman. Eve then shrewdly says nothing while Adam offers himself the same arguments Satan had used with Eve. Now Eve speaks again, seizing on Adam's hopeless slavery to her, and magnifying their great love as the vital issue. She embraces him and weeps, and Adam is eternally lost. Against the background created by Milton's dramatic skill and power and the poetry of four great speeches Eve stands forth as magnificent in her agency of evil as she had been in her early roles in the poem.
Milton’s Eve and the Other Eves

The tradition did not expand the statements in Genesis that immediately after their sin Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness and covered themselves with fig leaves. Milton’s scene in which carnal desire flames hotly, Eve matches Adam in lascivious intention, and they exhaust themselves in lustful indulgence, is an original and important addition, McColley has reminded us, to the ancient belief that lust was a consequence of the Fall.\textsuperscript{127} Baldwin mentions “a rabbinical precedent in representing the forbidden fruit as possessing the qualities of an aphrodisiac.”\textsuperscript{128} Nothing in the tradition, however, anticipates Milton’s vivid illustration of the immediate manifestation of carnality. In Milton, after Adam and Eve awaken from the exhausted sleep that follows their amorous excesses, they realize their nakedness. Milton’s stress on Eve’s equal interest and participation in what occurred adds further to her individuality and personality. It has been suggested by Bush that this episode perhaps is reminiscent of the conduct of Helen with Paris after Aphrodite had brought him from the battle to the palace and of what happened when Hera came to the summit of Mount Ida to divert Zeus’ attention from the events at Troy.\textsuperscript{129}

The traditional treatments of what followed Eve’s successful temptation of Adam vary in extensiveness and in order of events. In some versions, for illustration in the Book of Jubilees,\textsuperscript{130} the Apocalypsis Mosis,\textsuperscript{131} the Coventry plays,\textsuperscript{132} Du Bartas,\textsuperscript{133} and Andreini,\textsuperscript{134} Adam and Eve do not quarrel before God judges them. The Caedmon poet shows a penitent Eve who is with Adam for some time before God appears.\textsuperscript{135} In Grotius, Eve’s scene with Adam occurs before the Voice summons them to judgment; Eve comforts her husband and persuades him not to destroy himself.\textsuperscript{136} Likewise in Adam in Ballingschap Eve quarrels with Adam and becomes reconciled with him before Uriel appears, as God’s messenger, to sentence them.\textsuperscript{137} Milton’s scene between Eve and Adam, after they recover from the exhaustion that follows their lustful orgy and before they hear the voice of God, is very brief. Eve, as in some other accounts, is quick to place the blame on Adam. At this accusation, Adam “then first incens’d” denounces her severely and comments bitterly on what happens to “Him who to worth in women over-trusting/ Lets her Will
rule.” Milton may have seized this opportunity to speak from his own experience, but perhaps the reader should not be too ready to believe that whenever Adam assails women Milton is settling an old score.

In the brief scene in which God pronounces sentence on Eve and Adam, Milton does not expand the characterization of Eve, nor for that matter of Adam, that is given in the same scene in Genesis. In fact, the most powerful line, the simple statement in which Eve stands forth momentarily dignified, mature, and strong in contrast to Adam’s weak evasiveness, “The serpent me beguiled and I did eat,” is taken, with one slight change in word order from the King James Version. Nearly all other writers also had followed the Old Testament scene. In Jewish legend Eve does not, like Adam, confess her sins and ask for pardon, and among other transgressions for which God punishes the Serpent is his attempt to cause Adam’s death so that he can mate with Eve.\textsuperscript{188} Du Bartas has God assail Eve before she has a chance to speak and then exhibit a sadistic determination to torture her in the expletives he hurls at her after her sentence.\textsuperscript{189} Milton does not borrow these elaborations, however, or invent additions.

Milton demonstrates once more his sure sense of drama, organization, and characterization by placing after God’s sentence the major scene of Eve and Adam’s traditional quarrel and reconciliation. Thus, he portrays concisely and with powerful effectiveness the first results of the full impact of their actions and their readjustment to these circumstances and to each other. Whatever the poet intended, it is Eve’s scene far more than Adam’s. She is contrite, humble, heartbroken, but the restoration of her greatness is also beginning. Adam assails her with utmost viciousness. Eve’s humility and generosity defeat Adam’s bitterness. Her proposal of suicide, although made in disregard or ignorance of the greater issues which Adam thinks he understands, is the reaction of a realist, ready to face up to circumstances and, if necessary, to God himself. Beside the growing stature of Eve, Adam seems for a short while almost childish, but as the scene closes he again becomes worthy of her.

Most other writers, Avitus, the Caedmon poet, the author of \textit{Cursor Mundi}, Du Bartas, Grotius, Beaumont, Pordage, and Vondel among them, are not concerned with Eve after her sentence except
Milton's Eve and the Other Eves

to include her in the expulsion. Andreini leads Eve and Adam into an extended morality in which nothing is added to Eve's portrait. Salandra also extends the story through many scenes, stressing the grief of Adam and Eve because of the effects of their sin on mankind, but Eve's participation in this aftermath is not of any special importance.

In Books XI and XII of Paradise Lost Eve appears only briefly. Milton uses the occasions, however, to complete the portrait of the first of women — but human now through experience and self-regeneration. After her lament for the loss of the home she loves, she receives the Angel's consolation and benediction. When the revelation to Adam is finished, she awakens to join him, and to present her great curtain speech. Then in Milton's final separate reference to her he emphasizes her universal motherhood, and, by using the personal pronoun, he insures the crowning epithet. She has become "our Mother Eve."

Eve is usually considered, and rightly, as part of the gorgeous fabric of the great epic. Only when we study her alone, however, and in the light of what Milton's predecessors had achieved with her do we realize fully the magnificence of Milton's creation and understand something of the means by which it is accomplished. She stands with the greatest women in literature because of Milton's invention or sure selection of incident, his great skill in drama and dialogue, his profound insight into character, and his poetic genius.

2Milton, XV, 163.
3H. F. Fletcher, Milton's Rabbinical Readings (Urbana, 1930), p. 171.
6Avitus, Poematum de Mosaicae Gestiis, Libri Quinque, in Migne's Patrologia Latina, LIX, 333.
10The Complete Works of Joshua Sylvester, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart (Edinburgh, 1880), I, Sixth Day of First Week, lines 1045-1053.
DUDLEY R. HUTCHESON

14Joseph Beaumont, Psyche or Love’s Mystery (Cambridge, 1702), p. 82.
17Ginzberg, I, 68.
18Fletcher, Milton’s Rabbinical Readings, p. 174.
19Ibid., p. 179.
21Avitus, p. 333.
22Williams, pp. 85-87.
23Sylvester, I, First Day of Second Week, lines 76-81.
24Ibid., lines 281-283.
26Andreini, p. 329.
27Peyton, p. 61.
28Saldana, pp. 8, 38-43.
29Beaumont, pp. 82-84.
33Fletcher, Milton’s Rabbinical Readings, p. 33.
34Ginzberg, I, 68.
36Philo, I, 121.
37Avitus, p. 332.
39Ibid., p. 57.
40Williams, p. 88.
41Ibid., pp. 89-90.
42Grotius, pp. 19-20.
43Andreini, pp. 348-350.
45Beaumont, p. 84.
47Ginzberg, I, 72; Baldwin, pp. 369-370.
49Baldwin, p. 375.
50Philo, I, 125.
51Avitus, pp. 332-333.
52Grant McColley, Paradise Lost (Chicago, 1940), p. 173.
Milton's Eve and the Other Eves

66Sylvester, I, First Day of Second Week, lines 76-85, 281-283.
67Grotius, pp. 22-27.
69Andreiini, 357-358.
70Adam in Ballingschap, 126-127.
71Salandra, pp. 66-68.
72Adam in Ballingschap, p. 142.
73Avitus, p. 333.
74Andrew Ramsey, Poemata Sacra, 1633. Quoted from Kirkconnell, p. 285.
75Beaumont, p. 85.
76Pordage, quoted in The Celestial Cycle, p. 427.
77Andreiini, 356-357.
78Adam in Ballingschap, pp. 143-144.
79Ginzberg, I, 72-73.
81Avitus, p. 333.
82Peyton, p. 64.
84The Poetical Works of Richard Crashaw and Quarles' Emblems, ed. by George Gilfillan (Edinburgh, 1862), pp. 203-204.
85Salandra, p. 70.
86Charles, II, 146.
87Ginzberg, I, 72.
88Avitus, pp. 333-334.
91The Chester Plays, ed. by Thomas Wright, in A Supplement to Dodsley's Old Plays, ed. by Thomas Amyot et al. (London, 1853), p. 27.
92The Plays performed by the Craft of York . . . , ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (Oxford, 1885), p. 23.
93Grotius, pp. 31-32.
94Andreiini, 360-363.
95Lyndesay, p. 31.
96Peyton, p. 64.
97Adam in Ballingschap, pp. 146-148.
98Pordage, quoted in The Celestial Cycle, pp. 429-430.
99Salandra, p. 70.
100Charles, II, 146.
101Philo, I, 124-125.
102Grotius, pp. 31-32.
103Ginzberg, I, 72.
105Grotius, p. 30.
106Andreiini, pp. 361-363.
107Sylvester, I, First Day of Second Week, lines 302-333.
109Williams, pp. 120-121.
Sylvestor, First Day of Second Week, lines 346-348.

Grotius, pp. 28-35.

Thaler, p. 656.

Quarles, p. 204.

Beaumont, p. 86.

Salandra, pp. 70-78.

Avitus, p. 334.

Beaumont, p. 86.

Ginzberg, I, 74.


Fletcher, Milton’s Rabbinical Readings, p. 206.

Williams, p. 123.

Kennedy, p. 27.

Sylvestor, I, First Day of Second Week, lines 358-365.

Salandra, pp. 86-89.

Sylvestor, I, First Day of Second Week, lines 358-363.

Charles, I, 17.

Ibid., p. 146.

Ginzberg, I, 74.

St. Augustine, II, 42.

Kennedy, pp. 25-30.

Grotius, pp. 36-39.

Andreini, pp. 369-372.

Lynderay, p. 32.


Salandra, pp. 89-95.

Adam in Ballingschapel, pp. 149-154.

McColley, p. 177.

Baldwin, p. 376.


Charles, II, 16-17.

Ibid., p. 147.

The Coventry Mysteries, p. 25.

Sylvestor, First Day of Second Week, lines 365 ff.

Andreini, pp. 365-379.

Kennedy, pp. 32-35.

Grotius, pp. 42-49.

Adam in Ballingschapel, pp. 159-164.

Ginzberg, I, 77-78.

Sylvestor, First Day of Second Week, lines 434-459.