THE GARDEN CONTAINING MULTITUDES: PROTO-TRANSCENDENTALISM IN *PARADISE LOST*

A Thesis
by
BRIANNA MITCHELL

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APPROVED BY:

____
David L. Orvis, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Thesis Committee

____
Susan C. Staub, Ph.D.
Member, Thesis Committee

____
Zackary Vernon, Ph.D.
Member, Thesis Committee

____
Leonardo Flores, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Department of English

____
Marie Hoepfl, Ed.D.
Interim Dean, Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

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Brianna Mitchell
B.A., Appalachian State University
M.A., Appalachian State University

Chairperson: David L. Orvis, Ph.D.

This thesis builds upon recent contributions to ecocritical Milton studies to explore the universe Milton is creating in *Paradise Lost* as it prefigures transcendentalist thought. By doing comparative analyses of various transcendentalist texts and *Paradise Lost* I highlight the moments in which the literary traditions they engage it overlap. Doing so allows the lineage between early modern literature and the transcendentalist movement to be increasingly visible. Additionally, by reading Milton's monism and vitalism as proto-transcendentalist, new perspectives on how material bodies operate in Eden arise. Specifically, this exercise emphasizes the relationship of the reader to Adam and Eve and how these representations of humanity exist in the Garden of Eden. This leads to an examination of Eve's femininity in association with the feminization of the natural environment in the garden. Finally, this provides insight into how life and death operate within human bodies as Milton conceives of them.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to engage in transcendentalist literary culture and draw connections between the philosophies within that tradition and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* in order to analyze Milton's text. While there has been some discussion about the role Milton played in inspiring certain aspects of transcendentalist philosophy, I intend to intervene in this discussion in order to explore what transcendentalist philosophy can add to interpretations of *Paradise Lost.* By setting Milton in dialogue with various transcendentalists texts I will be able to highlight moments of intersection in the literary traditions and ideas that they engage with. These moments of intersection provide insight into the way Milton anticipates much of the way that humans and their interactions with the surrounding world are represented in transcendentalism. Ultimately, analyzing those moments of anticipation in *Paradise Lost* allows for a broader understanding of Milton's universe and how materiality operates within it. Connecting pastoral poetry and early representations of nature to American nature writing and venturing into environmentalist writing, in conjunction with emerging ecocritical observations on the early modern period, will help establish some of the theoretical framework my project will be engaging with. The context of nature as I discuss it tends to be closely tied to issues of materiality, which aids in connecting representations of monism and vitalism to representations of transcendentalist unity and the Oversoul. Materiality is also central to the way various bodies and life cycles are portrayed within nature and humanity. This introduction will define and explore some of these overarching terms that are at the core of my analysis.

Among the transcendentalist ideals that I am proposing Milton's work prefigures is the notion of unity among humans and harmony between different forms of life and nature;

this type of unity and harmony can be found in the concept of the Oversoul. The Oversoul refers to the unifying divinity that is contained within living souls. While the Oversoul is generally used in reference to specifically human souls, Ralph Waldo Emerson's seminal essay on the concept states, "Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE" ("Over-Soul" 3). The inclusion of "every part and particle" in this line suggests that this soul may encompass more than just humanity. In this way, the Oversoul may operate as a similar unifying ideal amongst all forms of life to that of vitalism. This means that the pervasive vital spirit that is present in *Paradise Lost* is also intrinsically linked to a divine spirit that bridges the gap between Milton's portrayal of God's presence within the earth and transcendentalism's belief in divinity possessed by the individual. With this basis for a transcendentalist spirit within Milton's nature, I intend to expand this comparison to identify other transcendentalist conventions within *Paradise Lost*.

I use materiality in this project to refer to the physical environment and the various forms of embodiment that occupy it. Much of this project builds upon exploration into the way that Milton personifies nature with focus on how humans exist as a component of nature. Milton's monism, the method through which he shows all things as being formed from the same initial matter, shows how material beings and objects are created and set into hierarchical relationships with one another. Meanwhile, vitalism in Milton's text shows how a vital force is shared among those material forms. Vitalist materialism in particular has had much to offer to Milton studies as of late, with the work of Jane Bennett suggesting that a vital force can be found in both human and nonhuman bodies as well as organic and

inorganic things. This introduction traces the various ongoing conversations surrounding materiality in *Paradise Lost*.

One of the primary scholars I am in dialogue with when dealing with ecocritical approaches to Milton is Leah Marcus. She identifies a gap in conversations between critics who focus on seventeenth-century vitalism and critics who focus on twenty-first-century ecocriticism which allows for readings of Milton that either project current environmentalist values onto Milton or exclude him from environmentalist questions entirely. In order to fill this gap, Marcus proposes that "ecocritical views of Milton have achieved sufficient intellectual traction that they need to incorporate seventeenth-century vitalism into their accounts of *Paradise Lost*" ("Ecocriticism and Vitalism" 100). She proposes that this approach would help to understand the complexities of the multiple narratives in *Paradise Lost* (Marcus "Ecocriticism and Vitalism" 97). In another study, Marcus diverges from preexisting scholarship that tends to label Milton's personification of the world as pathetic fallacy by arguing that Milton is not projecting human emotions onto the Earth, but rather presenting an Earth that is actually feeling those emotions. She asserts, "The transgression of Adam and Eve causes an immediate and direct injury to Earth, who feels their transgression as a 'wound' that alters the sensitive mechanisms connecting her to other elements of Eden" ("Pathetic Fallacy" 24). Marcus's work foregrounds some of the relationships between the earth and Adam and Eve, in the form of shared emotions and the effects of shared experiences, that I will be building upon to explore divinity that unites various life forms. These developments from Marcus in vitalist thought in which she suggests that nature, as Milton portrays it, is composed of numerous entities that share a vital force that signifies their status as living are among those that I am basing my connections to the Oversoul on.

Further connections between the use of vitalism to understand the material environment and transcendentalism can be found in explorations of nature and how humans understand their role in nature through time. This is prevalent in Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* in which she traces various natural forces from Spinoza's notion of Conatus to Thoreau's Wild in order to define her own concept of "thing-power" which, "gestures toward the strange ability of ordinary, man-made items to exceed their status as objects and to manifest traces of independence or aliveness constituting the outside of our own experience" (xvi). In linking her own "thing-power" to Thoreau's wildness—"a not-quite-human force that addled and altered human and other bodies" (2)—Bennett has both connected her particular endeavors within materiality to transcendentalism, and aided in constructing a system of exploring ecology in terms of humans, nonhuman life in nature, and nonhuman man-made objects, each of which according to her possesses a liveliness. These connections between Bennett and Marcus' works and transcendentalist thought provide an avenue into finding in Milton's work similar connections to transcendentalism. I further explore these connections by examining Milton's material Earth and how humans interact with it.

In addition to examining the way humans interact with the material Earth in Milton's text, I am working with the idea of nature as a system of many varied forms of being and embodiments that often includes humanity. Pre-existing scholarship on embodiment in the text will help me to identify how issues such as hierarchies and human interactions with nonhuman bodies fit into a transcendentalist reading of Milton's portrayal of life and divinity. One of the most prominent recent contributions to the discussion of embodiment in Milton is Jonathan Goldberg's chapter "Milton's Angels" in *Seeds of Things.* Goldberg picks up a number of threads from earlier critics, such as Bennett and Stephen Fallon, regarding

notions of vital matter and Milton's monism. Just as ecocritics use vitalism to explain how nature is related to humanity, Goldberg uses monism to connect the varied forms of embodiment of angels and humans. This connection, he argues, is established through digestion: "Raphael's ability to eat is matched by what he thinks may well be Adam's future [...] eating together in what becomes a transformation like that in which food loses its material property of one kind to become another, feeding the vital processes of life" (193). His exploration of digestion is similar to Charlotte Nicholls' comparison of Milton's monism to medical vitalism. Nicholls examines the work of contemporary scientist Francis Glisson, who worked with nutrition and explored the vital matter present in food and processes of digestion, to Milton's writing. The consumption of vegetable food implies the sublimation of vital matter that is then passed along into the consumer, either animal or human (131); in Nicholls' analysis, as in Goldberg's, vital matter sustains life, and implies that life is a shared state of being among various life forms and embodiments.

Embodiment also becomes an issue of gender for many scholars. This project will be exploring how the embodiment of gender influences the way that human bodies, in the form of each Adam and Eve, interact with other bodies, or lifeforms, in nature. My specific interest in gendered bodies will explore how gender plays a role in humanity's ability to learn, especially when Adam and Eve are each expected to perform certain roles in the Garden. For Goldberg, gender difference can be accounted for within Milton's monism as it is not an ontological difference. He draws connections between the shared appetites among angels and humans and what this suggests about gender and sexuality, stating, "The sex that Raphael describes is, like the eating process, one that makes angelic copulation the fulfillment of human aspiration" (Goldberg 194). This relationship between materiality and

embodiment, food, and gender is also significant to Ann Gulden who uses these factors to argue that Eve is a representation of the autonomy and skill of the feminine role. Gulden also emphasizes the presence of eating and consumption in the text as it relates to the gaining of knowledge. Raphael identifies "[t]he continuum between the material and the immaterial, food and knowledge," which is processed by Eve through her preparation of food and presented to the reader as "food for thought" (139). I intend to build upon these readings that investigate how gendered embodiment influences the way Adam and Eve are related to other bodies such as angels or food, but with a broader scope of how Adam and Eve each navigate the physical space of the garden and what this implies for their own bodies and minds.

The various ecologies present in *Paradise Lost* have also been explored as articulations of morality, both in what is done with the land and what the land is. My intervention in these particular explorations will relate to what is done with the land in terms of what knowledge is extracted from the land and what interactions afford for those extractions, rather than solely considering how the land is used and developed as scholars such as Juliet Cummins and Sarah Smith do. In addition to proposing that Milton's ecology on Earth is opposed to some of the exploitative values present in those contemporary notions of mechanist constructions of nature, Cummins discusses the ecology of Hell as a perversion of the Earth that is exploited in the way that would have been expected in the New Science, which is the school of thought that dichotomized the relationship between humans and nature in order to justify the human use of nature. When Hell and Pandemonium are being established, the land is being mined and used in a way that is commonly read as rape imagery of a female-coded body; Cummins emphasizes how "the disturbance of the hill's womb is a real violation of the sanctity of a (really) female body" (169). This reading of the land shows

how the land as an embodied being is affected by human presence and occupation, which I consider as well in the following chapters. Instead of Hell, Smith looks to Chaos for evidence of morality of the matter itself. In defining chaos as disorder, Smith argues that although the matter of Chaos does come from God, it is controlled by chance and not the order of God making it evil. Moreover, the rape imagery Cummins identifies is revisited by Smith as an act of disobedience to this order of God as developing that land requires moving matter from its natural place as dictated by God. These analyses highlight the rift between land usage sanctioned by God and the inherent corruption in land usage that is distanced from God and his intentions.

Morality is also a prevalent factor in linking between Milton and transcendentalism through tracing the development of religious sects that were popular in New England during the American Romantic era. Following first Milton's religious impact on transcendentalist thinkers, allows me to then do the comparative textual analysis found in the subsequent chapters. Scholars who discuss these religious connections provide a basis for further exploration of the connections between transcendentalist thought and *Paradise Lost*, but they rarely touch on the significance of nature in each of these poetic traditions which further intertwine the early modern and American Romantic eras. My thesis will attempt to fill this particular gap and argue that Milton's portrayal of nature is transcendental. This argument will allow for the exploration of the presence of distinctly transcendentalist values within *Paradise Lost,* rather than just the presence of Milton within transcendentalist texts. One of the first pieces I will be engaging with that traces the links between these literary and religious traditions is Phyllis Cole's analysis of the impact of Milton's puritanism on Unitarian preachings that were followed by transcendentalists. In contrast to other literary

figures who praised *Paradise Lost* for its poetic power and ability to portray God through its form, Cole explains that preacher William Ellery Channing was more focused on the moralistic implications of the power of God than Milton's portrayal of Him. She suggests that, "Channing does ostensibly discuss Milton's poetry and theology; but he ascribes the poet's power over language to the 'soul,' not the 'musical ear,' and he finds the real interest of Christian Doctrine to be its manifestation of 'the mind of Milton'" (132). Moreover, she argues that for Channing and his followers, *Paradise Lost* is not so much a tale of the fall of Adam and Eve, but rather a tale of redemption that allowed transcendentalists to "salvage" puritan ideology that claims humans are innately corrupt by reconciling it with its "creative moral force" represented by Milton and his poetry (132). I expand this perspective on redemption and salvation in *Paradise Lost* to look at cycles and physical life processes present in both Milton's text and transcendentalist works.

In a more recent addition to the conversation bringing together *Paradise Lost* and transcendentalism, Rachel B. Griffis tracks a similar link to Cole between Milton and transcendentalism, but focuses on Emerson as well as Channing and how their beliefs were shaped by Protestantism. In this approach she cites Emerson's own claim that "the Protestant Reformation produced Calvinism, which 'rushes to be Unitarianism, as Unitarianism rushes to be pure Theism'" (30). Not only is there this link between how these theologies developed and eventually contributed to transcendentalism, but "Emerson, perhaps the most studied and influential of the transcendentalists, writes about movements such as the Protestant Reformation and the American Revolution as steps in the path to self-reliance, the ultimate form of human freedom" (Griffis 32). Griffis' work emphasizes how Milton was able to embody that idealization through his "spiritual autonomy" and rejection of church authority

(33). Griffis also identifies the spiritual link between poetry and Christianity that Channing proposes when arguing that poetry has "salvific" properties (34), meaning that transcendentalist literature, and other contemporary literature, is representative of redemption.

Redemption is not only a function of literature and faith, but it is also related to the structure of *Paradise Lost*. I will be identifying patterns and paths forged in the composition of the text and how they influence the reader as both an individual and as a standin for the larger classification of humanity. Some scholars have already begun working with these patterns, but my approach has a stronger focus on language and how Milton uses cyclical and temporal language to bring readers on these paths. These other scholars' perspectives approach questions of how knowledge is acquired as well as how knowledge and meaning are controlled by language, specifically the word of God. Ayelet Langer and Mandy Green, for example, explore the narrative structure of *Paradise Lost* in the form of temporal structures that reveal patterns of degeneration and regeneration. They look at these patterns in relation to human history, allowing a relationship to be made between Adam and Eve, humanity as a whole, and the reader. Redemption of humanity by Christian faith is represented by Adam and Eve's redemption at the end of the text. My analysis, then, adds that redemption is also shown in the physical body through processes of reincarnation and new life after death.

In addition to investigating the relationship between Adam and Eve and the reader insofar as readers experience the same regenerative cycles, I also intend to examine various ways that knowledge and its acquisition vary between the reader and Adam and Eve. God plays a pivotal role in granting knowledge not only to Adam and Eve but to readers as well,

and Brian Johnson's reading highlights some of the effects of that role. Johnson provides a perspective on *Paradise Lost* in which the reader experience is a more centralized function. He attempts to grapple with the Barthesian model of the death of the author as well as the birth of the reader in the realm of Milton's text, but concludes that there is a "fundamental incompatibility of Barthes's Author and Milton's God" due to the inherent authority and inextricable intent within God's word (75). In Johnson's reading, God seems to allow for interpretation in order to uphold Milton's values of free will, but ultimately God's intention will be the authoritative interpretation. This is exemplified in Satanic readings of the text in which "God's word may be divorced from its true meaning through subversive interpretation [but] God and his readers must still work together to realize an ultimately dialogic vision" (74). There is tension between the way that the reader learns through reading and the way that what is read is controlled by Milton, who takes on a god-like role in his authority over the text.

My thesis will further examine the topics outlined above and uncover new ways that these topics are interwoven in *Paradise Lost*. Setting the poem in comparison with various transcendentalist texts reveals how Milton anticipates much of the way the material world is represented and interacted with by transcendentalist writers. This project will build upon other ecocritical readings of Milton which address material and immaterial components of nature, and ultimately uses the transcendentalist framework to provide a new way of approaching the environment and ecologies that Milton creates. My aim is to show that there is a larger system of life present in the text based on this unity, and to explain how that unity affects or is affected by embodied processes such as life, death, and learning.

My first chapter provides further basis for reading Milton's prelapsarian Eden as a proto-transcendentalist universe. I do this by highlighting the relationship between the reader and Adam and Eve and the differences between their post- and prelapsarian mindsets. In order to draw those connections I consider how the reader is moved through the text by examining what I call the text-scape. The text-scape is a parallelism to landscape, which I define at length in Chapter 1, that provides a method for understanding how the text is an environment that the author crafts in order to bring the reader on the journey of the story. In the context of *Paradise Lost*, following the reader through the text-scape will help to uncover systems of knowledge by showing how the reader is granted certain knowledge of the world of the text and how this at times differs from what knowledge is granted to Adam and Eve. Additionally, this exercise shows the ways in which the experience of the reader is at times bridged to that of Adam and Eve, and how this unity between these varied journeys reflects the larger unity in Eden prior to the fall. In order to thoroughly examine the text-scape and what it shows about the reader's role in *Paradise Lost,* I have limited my textual analysis to Book 4. This allows Chapter 1 to focus primarily on the transcendentalist elements of prelapsarian Eden.

My second chapter covers what I am calling "transcendent femininity." This chapter will build upon the first chapter's exploration of knowledge acquisition in order to identify how that process might be varied for Adam and Eve on the basis of gendered difference. A common ideal in transcendentalist philosophy is that it is encouraged to go out into nature and learn from it, as well as to trust one's own knowledge and independence. This method of learning is usually associated with masculine knowledge acquisition given that many of the central transcendental texts that outline this form of education, such as Emerson's "Self-

Reliance," only address fellow men or use "man" as a standin for humanity, hinting that men are traditionally expected to engage in the lifestyles that these texts advocate for. For Milton, however, this form of knowledge acquisition tends to reflect the way Eve is written.

While this phenomenon is present elsewhere in the text, a significant textual focus for this chapter is Book 5. Raphael's role of educating Adam through stories reveals a contrast in how Adam acquires knowledge in comparison to Eve who often wanders out into the garden alone. Gulden's "dinner party scene" analysis is a considerable contribution to this discussion of gender roles in relation to the other life in the Garden in the form of plant matter. By portraying Eve as the "homemaker" in the sense that she is the one preparing the food for Raphael's visit, Milton is playing into traditional beliefs regarding gendered labor, and even reflecting something akin to separate spheres ideology. Additionally Eve is more closely aligned with nature and the garden, and nature is often portrayed as feminine. I highlight moments in which Eve and nature are similarly bodied through female anatomy and how it is this embodiment that affords for Eve's labor and knowledge. Alternatively, by making Eve the first of the pair to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge, Milton is representing the feminine role as one in which knowledge is acquired from communing with nature, as well as one that is non-conformist— another facet of transcendentalism— in that Eve follows a path that deviates from the instructions of God. While Milton is here engaging with the conventions of what will ultimately become transcendentalism, he is also subverting the expectations of that philosophy. I use this investigation into learning and embodiment to suggest that the fall of humanity, while tragic, is a moment of Eve attaining transcendentalist knowledge or fostering a transcendentalist relationship with divinity.

My third chapter focuses on reincarnation. As my first chapter has already examined movement through the epic, this chapter will be able to revisit the patterns and cycles of motion that are present in the text. Similarly, my second chapter's focus on the embodiment of gender and knowledge acquisition allows for the exploration of how Adam and Eve also experience death through their human embodiment. Here I will turn to Langer and Green to explore how regeneration relates to reincarnation. In the final moments of the text, as Adam and Eve step out of Eden and into the rest of the world, it seems that their lives in the garden are ending, but they are reincarnated into a new life that is contingent upon their ability to walk into the earth in a new way. I also engage in some comparative analysis between *Paradise Lost* and Walt Whitman who, in his own take on a sort of epic poem "Song of Myself," does explore reincarnation as a physical process of corporeal embodiment in the way the body breaks down and "returns" to the earth. I will link this process to the larger narrative of *Paradise Lost* in which an act of "death," the fall, is ultimately a renewal of life in the way that the poem ends with Adam and Eve taking their first steps out of paradise and into a new world to live new lives in the Earth. In addition to the closing book of the work, I turn to specific moments in the text that deal with the topic of death in ambiguous ways that seem to suggest some cycle of renewal or some form of life within death. Among these moments is Book 8 when Adam talks about falling asleep feeling like returning to a time when he was not alive and uses the verbiage "dissolve." I will discuss here the relationship between dying and being not yet alive as well as the imagery of a body dissolving when there is no longer life within it. Similarly, Book 9 depicts Eve's attempt to grapple with her own forthcoming death after her transgression and implies something akin to rebirth in the form of Adam living with another Eve. In examining death and how it is deconstructed in both

Milton's and Whitman's texts, I posit that the regenerative process in *Paradise Lost* is not just spiritual salvation, but also a material reincorporation into the world similar to that which Whitman later outlines.

My aim with this project is to further bridge together the various literary traditions that Milton and later transcendentalist writers are engaging with. I also intend to explore the presence of an Oversoul-like concept and transcendentalist unity within Milton's nature in order to understand his nature and vitalism in a way that has not yet been considered. This will provide new avenues into the human lifecycle and experience, as well as reveal new dynamics in how humans acquire knowledge when interacting with and being a part of nature. While interpersonal and interspecies relations, divine and secular alike, in *Paradise Lost* tend to be discussed primarily in relation to hierarchies, by focusing on the dialogic exchanges between the various life forms within the text— by which I mean the ways in which humans and the earth are consistently exchanging matter, labor, and knowledge in contrast to one-way linear hierarchies— I am able to emphasize how Milton is crafting a universe where living entities and the spaces they occupy are unified through a transcendental divine existence. My goal is not to disregard those hierarchies, but rather to further illuminate how various social, political, and ecological systems on Earth are being shaped by more complicated interactions between various types of bodies and material beings.

CHAPTER ONE: THE TEXT-SCAPE OF *PARADISE LOST*

My aim in this chapter is to examine the relationship between the reader of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Adam and Eve in order to reveal the larger dynamics between humanity and their surrounding environment presented in the text. This examination will provide the framework for arguing that there is a transcendental unity being developed by Milton between the various life forms present in the Garden of Eden. This initial identification of a transcendentalist ideal in Milton's nature will ultimately allow me to explore in my following chapters the other implications of transcendentalism within the embodied experiences and processes that Adam and Eve take part in throughout the epic. This first chapter builds upon the work being done by ecocritical Milton scholars as well as long standing conversations surrounding reader response theory within *Paradise Lost*. In an attempt to further bridge these two theoretical avenues, I am offering the term text-scape—a close reading tool and parallelism to landscape—which I will here define at length by situating it within a broader theoretical dialogue. After defining text-scape I will investigate the implications of authorship as it applies to each Milton, God, Adam and Eve, and the reader, which reveals how *Paradise Lost's* text-scape is uniquely crafted and explored by various agents. This will finally lead to an exploration of specific scenes within the text-scape of *Paradise Lost* and comparing them to transcendentalist writings in order to more fully understand the harmonious universe Milton creates in Eden. This chapter's analysis of Milton's text-scape is limited to primarily Book 4, as closely considering the development of Adam and Eve's narrative in this section alongside the journey of the reader and Milton's representations of Eden's landscape will allow me to focus my reading and more effectively reveal Milton's universe as transcendentalist.

Defining the Text-Scape

Literary criticism has long been concerned with the source of meaning within the texts we study. The advent of structuralism and its later destabilizing in post-structuralism has contributed to contemporary theories that suggest that meaning and reality are unfixed, and that this unfixedness produces a fluidity of meaning and interpretation. This focus on the interpretive act within reading is the main concern for many reader response theorists who argue that the meaning of a text is dependent upon the reader's experience. Even so, these theorists often consider the role of the author and questions of intended meanings. I want to offer the term text-scape as a means of further exploring the way a reader navigates a text in conjunction with the relationship between the reader, author, and reality of the text. Just as many key scholars—such as Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish who I will be reading further in depth in this chapter—who developed reader response theory highlight the importance of the author's intention in bringing the reader to a certain interpretation or understanding of the text, my intervention into reader-response theory is concerned with the way that the author situates the text in order to bring the reader on a sort of journey through it. While reader response theory tends to consider the situational context, the larger external institutions within which we come into contact with language and texts, that affects the way a reader makes meaning from a text, my question is what happens when the situation is the text itself? In what ways is a reader's ability to make meaning being influenced by the internal reality of the text which they are being pulled into when they read? In addition to the personal and institutional backgrounds that surround a reader and contribute to the particular mindset with which they approach a text, the text is another layer to the context that surrounds a reader as they perform the act of reading. By examining reader response and affect theory further in

depth and bringing them into dialogue with ecocriticism, I propose that examining a work through the navigation of its text-scape—a parallelism of landscape—can help us understand how a text is constructed in order to produce certain effects in the reader as they traverse the language.

My work with the text-scape is concerned with relationships between language and the environment in ways similar to the concerns of ecocritics. Ecocritical theory deals with the ways that the environment is represented in texts and what those texts can tell us about the ways humans interact with the environment. In her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty writes about the future of ecocriticism:

> An ecologically focused criticism is a worthy enterprise primarily because it directs our attention to matters about which we need to be thinking. [...] I would like to see a position in every literature department for a specialist in literature and the environment. I would like to see candidates running on a green platform elected to the highest offices in our professional organizations. We have witnessed the feminist and multi-ethnic critical movements radically transform the profession, the job market, and the canon. And because they have transformed the profession, they are helping to transform the world. (xxiv)

Ecocriticism, at least the version of it that Glotfelty imagines here, has a strong activist drive to make changes to reality through literary criticism and humanities work. Writing about the environment as it exists within literature is a first step toward finding solutions for environmental problems as it prompts us to begin thinking about those problems. In many ways, however, ecocritics still maintain a strict divide between the environment and the language that represents it. While literature can expose us to problems, reveal elements of our interactions with our surroundings, and help guide us toward potential solutions, the literature that is being examined is still a figurative realm that seemingly has no bearing on reality.

More recent developments in ecocriticism have begun to rework this dichotomy of the environment and language in order to highlight the affective capabilities of language and

literature. Stephen Ahern outlines three main questions that account for affect within literary criticism:

> - What are the limits of representation, especially as regards fictional characters by definition removed from the quickenings of affect that impinge on physical bodies?
> - What are the sensual resonances, the aesthetic engagements, the affective investments of readers and writers?
> - What identities, what affective assemblages—queer, hybrid, transnational—take shape in the spaces opened by heightened emotion? (3)

We see similarities here between the central ideas of affect theory and the concerns of ecocritics, such as principles of representation and the resonances of readers, but what was not outlined at the time of this publication is a concern with the environment and ecology. As advancements in these theoretical pursuits have proceeded, we can now flesh out the list of identities, or "affective assemblages," Ahern provides to include identities shaped by the environment. This means identities that are shaped by human interactions with nature, identities based on spatial situations within an environment, and the identity of environmentalist. One scholar who has contributed to further bringing issues of affect into ecocritical approaches is Scott Knickerbocker. He identifies the running divide between how different theoretical fields consider linguistic representations of reality, stating, "[p]ut simply, in the battle of representation, if poststructuralists are on the side of language, then ecocritics have largely been on the side of physical reality" (3). Knickerbocker then proposes a need to think more critically about the power of language to have effects on reality, specifically through "the power of literature to affect behavior" (5). This need can be met by considering the bodily and psychosomatic effects that language can have on the reader.

Although there is this drive to bring language and reality closer to one another, ecocritics make clear that language and reality cannot be fully conflated onto one another.

Knickerbocker acknowledges this in explaining that "reading and writing are not the same as submerging oneself in a river or encountering a herd of caribou on the northern tundra. But as imperfectly as we link language to land, we are the animals who naturally use the tool of language to make just such attempts" (7). While it is true that language can never be removed from its status of representation, it can have the affective power of the landscape that is being represented. Just as reading is a mental process in which meaning is made in the mind of the reader, reading is a physical process that relies on sensory stimulation in the form of linear procession through the text.

Iser writes notably of this reading process and how it is the act of reading that brings the text into being. He explains that "[t]he convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader" (279). Iser also uses Roman Ingarden's theory of intentional sentence correlatives to explain how sentences are "component parts" of a text that "only take on their real meaningfulness through the interaction of their correlatives" (282). These connections between correlatives, according to Iser, are the points at which the reader is able to "climb aboard" the text (282). Here is where I begin to diverge from Iser's conception of the reading process as I want to consider what happens when we conceive of the reader as climbing within the text rather than just climbing aboard it. Iser's phrasing here seems to ironically diminish the active role of the reader by suggesting that they are simply boarding a vehicle that drives them to their meaning-making. Instead, I want to emphasize the active role that I think Iser is truly trying to depict by thinking of reading as a bodily movement through the text.

Iser's understanding of reading is in many ways shared by Fish who argues that reading is not a matter of what the text says or means, but rather what the text does to the reader. In looking at reading as an experience in this way, a text is "no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an event, something that happens to, and with the participation of, the reader" (Fish "Literature in the Reader" 125). Alongside this opposition that Iser and Fish are operating within between text as object and text as experience, in which they privilege the notion of text as experience, they also create an opposition between text's existence within spatial and temporal realms, with privilege on the temporal realm. In reality, however, a text exists both within time and space and although meaning is created in the mind of the reader, it cannot be overlooked that this meaning relies on somatic processes both in the internal mind and the external situation of the body of the reader. The linearity to the reading process that Iser outlines is temporal in that each sentence is approached by the reader at a subsequent moment in time after the last, but it is also spatial in that the reader makes this approach through an physical engagement with the words on the page even just at the level of shifting eye movement. This can be taken a step further by regarding reading as a pseudo-spatial process that brings the reader across the expanse of the language used. Reading is not just the movement of the eye across the page, but the psychosomatic response of being led through a textual environment.

In addition to the body processes that are necessary for reading to occur, affect theory further explores the psychological, sensual, and emotional processes that are triggered in the body when reading. Seigworth and Gregg's examination of affect theory in *The Affect Theory Reader* considers the particular affects that reading and literature have on bodies (human and otherwise). They attempt to provide a definition of affect that does not rely on the typical

terminology of “force,” as in the force that the text exerts. What they offer instead is the notion that “Affect can be understood then as a gradient of bodily capacity,” that affect refers not just to the bodily response to something but to “a body's belonging to a world of encounters or; a world's belonging to a body of encounters but also, in non-belonging, through all those far sadder (de)compositions of mutual in-compossibilities” (Seigworth and Gregg 2). When using affect theory as a form of literary criticism, the text becomes the world that a body is belonging or non-belonging to.

While literary darwinism is beyond the scope of this theoretical pursuit, it does deal with similar concerns of bodily experiences, psychology, and ecology in literature, and as such I find it useful to consider Joseph Carroll’s question of, “If the subject of ecocriticism is the relation of literature and the natural world, and if this relation is more important and more elemental than any other concern, does it not follow that ecocriticism should identify itself as a matrix for all literary study?” (86). His subsequent proposal, “Since the relation between organisms and natural environments is a necessary precondition of all experience, one could reasonably argue that the special topic of ecocriticism is more elemental than the topics of feminism, Marxism, or any other form of political criticism, and that the basic physical conditions of organic life take conceptual precedence over semiotics and theories of ‘culture’ and ‘discourse,’” provides a framework for considering affective questions regarding bodily engagement with a text (Carroll 86). Moreover, in expanding ecocritical principles to be the basis for literary analysis before other cultural studies approaches, Carroll introduces an argument that can be furthered by making a case to read all texts as representations of the natural world, not simply those that explicitly deal with nature and the environment.

In order to fully understand what is meant by text-scape as a parallelism of landscape, it can be useful to first explain what definition of landscape this relationship is based on. In addition to the idea of the visual elements of an area of land or nature, landscape is defined as "the landforms of a region in the aggregate," meaning when a person engages with a landscape they are engaging with the individual components that create it. In extending the parallelism, the "region" of the text-scape would be the text itself, composed of its linguistic units such as sentences and words that act as its landforms. With this blending of theoretical approaches that prompt scholars to consider not just the role a reader plays in creating meaning from the work they come into contact with but also how the relationship a human has with their surrounding environment can influence that meaning, text-scape offers a way to consider both at once. Traditional reader response theory as proposed by scholars like Fish and Iser tends to think of a text as lacking meaning until a reader creates that meaning and brings the text into being. This idea perpetuates an internal conception of reading in which the text is brought into the mind of the reader. Instead, considering the text-scape allows this to be subverted, and we can in turn imagine the reader being brought into the text.

The particular sect of reader response theory that Fish is known for argues that an author writes for competent readers, that even though meaning is created by the reader through the act of reading, the author expects the reader to be competent enough to reach a desired or intended interpretation. We can think of this as there being a path that the author has constructed to lead readers through the text. Considering the text-scape of a given text provides a method for close reading with consideration for not just the language or the effect of the language on the reader, but for the positioning of the reader within the text. The author, the person who crafts the text-scape, works to bring the reader through the content of the text

in a particular way in order to prompt certain interpretive acts in the reader. These interpretative acts are the product of the affective properties of the language, and they help to reveal the particular dynamics that a reader experiences with their surrounding environment.

The Text-Scape of *Paradise Lost*

Considering the text-scape as it is crafted by the author provides an effective entrance into the text-scape of *Paradise Lost*. Notions of authorship in Milton's text are particularly convoluted given the connections made between God and Milton as the authors of the narrative in addition to the statuses of God as the "sovran author" of the universe and of humans as the authors of ourselves. Authorship is invoked repeatedly in Milton's text, and it is not always used with the same degree of authoritative power. Examining how the title of author functions in different ways allows us to see author/reader relationships develop in a way that further aligns Milton's reader with Adam and Eve, while still highlighting the division between them created by the contrast between pre- and post-lapsarian views.

The first authorial relationship I want to consider is the relationship between Milton and God. It is common in Christian theology to consider God to be the Author as God is regarded as the highest authority who is responsible for crafting the divine plan for all of humanity. The opening lines of *Paradise Lost* reference that plan:

> OF Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
> Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
> Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat (1.1-5)

Here Milton is highlighting not just the story of Adam and Eve in Eden that the rest of the epic is centered on, but going beyond the initial fall of man to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. In these lines, as in several places throughout the rest of the work,

Milton is drawing attention to God's foreknowledge of the events of the narrative. Milton repeatedly invokes his "heavenly muse" to explain how he has access to this narrative (1.6). In the front matter, Andrew Marvell explains that Milton's inspiration for the epic is prophetic and has been granted to Milton as a reward in light of his loss of sight. It is Milton's prophetic status that allows him to speak for God in pursuit of his goal to "justifie the wayes of God to men" (1.26).

Milton's channeling of God's voice is not without its limitations, however, as seen in his later invocation in Book 3. Milton opens this book with the lines, "Hail holy light, ofspring of Heav'n first-born, / Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam / May I express thee unblam'd?" (3.1-3). His narratorial voice is faltering as he questions whether or not he is representing and addressing God properly as Light. Milton is shifting focus onto the muse that endows him with access to this tale, rather than attributing the work directly to himself. He recenters his blindness here as a means of articulating his own restricted access to the world:

> Presented with a Universal blanc
> Of Nature's works to mee expung'd and ras'd,
> And wisdome at one entrance quite shut out.
> So much the rather thou Celestial light
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight. (3.48-55)

In identifying his muse as "Celestial light," Milton is drawing attention to the darkness that has replaced his sight. While he still maintains his own role in telling this story by bringing back into focus the fact that he is being given access to "things invisible to mortal sight," he is also deferring to the superior insight of his heavenly muse who has provided this prophetic vision in place of his loss of mortal vision. Milton, then, preserves his status as author and his

role in crafting this text in order to relay the information to his readers, but also makes it clear that he is channeling a higher authority that gives him the knowledge of that information.

By outlining the plot of the narrative that he is setting out to tell and stating its origin as heavenly in his invocations, Milton is introducing one of the core tensions within *Paradise Lost* and Chrisitianity in general: the coexistence of God's foreknowledge and the free will of humanity. This tension complicates the role of the reader as it prompts questions regarding whether or not the reader has free will to create meaning in a text where the meaning comes from God. Brian Johnson approaches this issue of how the reader is granted interpretative power by arguing that the reader is allowed to make meaning that strays from that meaning intended by God, but that these alternative readings are often considered "satanic" and subversive. Johnson explains that, "Although God's word may be divorced from its true meaning through subversive interpretation, God and his readers must still work together to realize an ultimately dialogic vision" (74). Similarly, in Book 3 God draws attention to his own foreknowledge stating:

> if I foreknew,
> Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
> Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.
> So without least impulse or shadow of Fate,
> Or aught by me immutablie foreseen,
> They trespass, Authors to themselves in all
> Both what they judge and what they choose (3.117-23)

Hence the tensions that fallen readers feel between the ability of humans to have free will in a world that is foreknown by an omniscient God is entirely absent in God's perspective. He says that Adam and Eve's "fault" was certain regardless if it was known by him or not, and even surrenders some amount of his Author title to Adam and Eve in naming them "Authors

to themselves." William Empson in *Milton's God* has famously taken issue with the belief that God is not culpable for the fall. He cites moments in which it seems that God intervenes in situations where otherwise Adam and Eve could have been protected from their temptation and concludes, "I do not see what the incident can mean except that God was determined to make man fall" (Empson 112). Therefore, there are conflicting accounts as to whether or not God can be blamed for the fall of humanity; regardless, the fact remains that God is still "the sov'ran Architect" of the universe (5.256). He gives Adam and Eve the freedom to wander the Garden of Eden however they choose, but it is still a garden designed and constructed by God. In Milton's effort to share his prophetic vision of the story of the fall, he similarly constructs a garden through language that readers are asked to wander through with Adam and Eve as they advance toward their transgression.

Showing that God grants authorship to Adam and Eve allows Milton to then forge a connection between them and the reader as both being representations of humanity who are tasked with navigating the world that God has created. It is Adam and Eve's authorship that allows them to have free will, which is what permits them to eat the fruit in spite of God's prohibition. They have authority over themselves only, unlike God who is "thee Author of all being" (3.374). In this way an analogous relationship is being formed in which God is to Adam and Eve as Milton is to the reader. This analogy can never fully be deconstructed as the experiences and perspectives of Adam and Eve can never be fully conflated with those of the reader. Both are being tasked with navigating a landscape that has been produced for them by a greater power, but the reader will always already have fallen. This phenomenon of the *Paradise Lost* reader's fallen perspective is extensively examined by Fish in *Surprised by Sin* in which he argues that "Milton's method is to re-create in the mind of the reader (which

is, finally, the poem's scene) the drama of the Fall, to make him fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity, that is to say, 'not deceived'" (1). If Fish's assertion is correct that Milton is making the reader fall, we must acknowledge another stark disparity between Milton and God which is that God expressly does not make Adam and Eve fall. For the sake of my analysis, Milton's role in the reader experience is not so much a question of whether or not he intended to make the reader fall, but rather the fact that he arranged the text that leads the reader to the fall. Thus, there is this fundamental difference between navigating the landscape and navigating the text-scape: Adam and Eve naturally and unknowingly make their way to the fall, whereas readers know the fall is the inevitable conclusion to their journey.

Now that the role of authorship in constructing the text-scape of *Paradise Lost* has been examined, I will begin my entrance into the text-scape in Book 4 when Adam and Eve are discussing their first days and the work they are doing in the Garden of Eden. Although the text-scape itself would encompass the entire epic, I choose this particular moment to begin explicating it, as Book 4 first introduces Adam and Eve and as such represents the moment when the journey of the reader begins to merge with that of Adam and Eve. These early depictions of humanity in the garden sets precedents as to how humans are expected to, and in actuality shown to, interact with their surrounding environments. More specifically, these are the precedents set in a prelapsarian Eden. While the reader is joining Adam and Eve on this path toward the fall, variations in what information is presented to the reader compared to that presented to Adam and Eve reinforces the incompatibilities of their viewpoints.

The first conversation between Adam and Eve shows them discussing how they came to be in the garden and how they have been instructed to behave there. They are talking about how God, "the Power," made them for this world, and accordingly the world is good for them, and they go on to acknowledge how the garden is available to them except for the one prohibition:

> That rais'd us from the dust and plac't us here
> In all this happiness, who at his hand
> Have nothing merited, nor can performe
> Aught whereof hee hath need, hee who requires
> From us no other service then to keep
> This one, this easie charge, of all the Trees
> In Paradise that bear delicious fruit
> So various, not to taste that onely Tree
> Of knowledge (4.416-24)

This passage already sets up a dialogic relationship between Adam and Eve and their environment by explaining that they were formed from that environment, "raised from the dust," directly after mentioning that this same environment is for them. The reference to this "dust to dust" theology privileges a material connection to nature and ensures that humanity be considered a part of nature despite being a unique embodiment from the other plants and animals found in Eden. It is interesting, though, that Adam here identifies the only "service" that is asked of himself and Eve as heeding the prohibition not to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge despite later mentioning "our delightful task / To prune these growing Plants, and tend these Flours" (4.437-8). Adam and Eve do have other duties in Eden, but obedience is the one duty being here identified as a service to God.

As we read the above lines, we find ourselves feeling included in Adam's address to Eve. When he states how God "plac't us here," it occurs to the reader that we also have been placed within our own garden, the textual garden that Milton has crafted as a representation

of the garden Adam and Eve are placed in (4.416). Proceeding, Adam refers to the garden as "this happiness," a title which follows his earlier description of the "ample World / Be infinitly good, and of his good / As liberal and free as infinite" (4.413-5). By associating this free and infinite space in which we find ourselves with happiness, readers begin to feel a vastness within the text—especially in light of the fact that we are in the fourth book before we are united with Adam and Eve and have eight books left to traverse, it begins it feel as though we are truly in a vast landscape of language; the highlighting of freedom and positive emotion of this vastness then establishes the feeling of Paradise as a place of opportunity and perfection, even before Adam and Eve have labeled Eden as "Paradise." Evoking this sense of peace in the reader by placing us with Adam and Eve in Paradise sets the stage for an immediate strain within our mind when Adam does finally mention "Paradise" as this happens during his mention of God's prohibition. When the Tree of Knowledge is introduced by Adam, we know it is the tree that will ultimately be his downfall, but we also know he is unaware of this and even calls it an "easie charge" to refrain from eating the forbidden fruit. By presenting us with the perspective of Adam in this sequence, readers are forced to sit with this discomfort as our fallen stance constantly reminds us of what is to come.

Nevertheless, we continue our travels through the text-scape and to Adam and Eve's discussion of their role in the garden, specifically God's patterning of work and rest later in this book. Adam outlines to Eve the relationship they have to the other animals by referencing their need for rest in contrast to the other creatures:

> since God hath set
> Labour and rest, as day and night to men
> Successive, and the timely dew of sleep
> Now falling with soft slumbrous weight inclines
> Our eye-lids; other Creatures all day long
> Rove idle unimploid, and less need rest;

> Man hath his daily work of body or mind
> Appointed, which declares his Dignitie,
> And the regard of Heav'n on all his waies (4.612-20)

Reading these first four lines sets the reader up for an incoming rest. The repetition of *S* sounds, “successive; sleep; soft; slumbrous,” leading to “our eye-lids” creates a slow lilting movement across the page which causes the reader to believe that we are approaching a moment of repose in our expedition through the text. Although Adam and Eve continue to converse for almost seventy lines after this, they are making their way into the night and toward their sleep, as signaled by the closings of their speeches, “Night bids us rest,” and, “when sleep hath shut all eyes” (4.633; 4.658). Readers, however, are given nearly 400 more lines to traverse. We are led down a different path that does not offer us the repose that Adam and Eve are granted until the end of the book.

While also making obvious this distinction between the experience of the reader and the experience of Adam and Eve, Adam’s speech does provide a point of unity between the two experiences: navigation. Adam appears to be using this speech to make sense, either for himself or for Eve, of the distinction between humans and the other animals created by the task given to humans of working in the garden. This moment of making sense is perhaps better labeled as the act of navigation, a process of identifying his position in a larger environment and deciphering how to proceed in that context, that Adam and Eve and the reader must each perform. As Adam makes sense of what is being asked of him and how it sets him apart from the other animals in Eden, he is mentally navigating that space while he physically navigates it. As the reader reads these lines, we navigate them through our meaning-making processes.

As both parties, Adam and Eve and the reader, continue their walks, Adam and Eve once again praise God's creation of the world and the unity of night and day:

> Thou also mad'st the Night,
> Maker Omnipotent, and thou the Day,
> Which we in our appointed work imployd
> Have finisht happie in our mutual help
> And mutual love, the Crown of all our bliss
> Ordaind by thee, and this delicious place
> For us too large, where thy abundance wants
> Partakers, and uncropt falls to the ground.
> But thou hast promis'd from us two a Race
> To fill the Earth (4.724-33)

The repetition in this book of the balance between night and day as well as the repetition in these lines of mutuality, "mutual help / And mutual love," provides the reader with a sense of harmony. Even the one notion of discordance in these lines, the idea that Eden is "too large" for just Adam and Eve, is easily brushed away by God's promise that Adam and Eve will reproduce and humanity will increase in numbers to be able to occupy the garden with them. The reader acts as proof of this promise, as in the instance that we are reading these lines we occupy this space in the garden alongside Adam and Eve. We experience the abundance of Eden in the form of the vast language we can consume. Even though we cannot be divorced from our fallen perspective which provides us various avenues to travel and at times takes us down paths separate from Adam and Eve, this passage reveals that this particular environment we are placed in is the prelapsarian Eden, and the unity and ideality communicated through these lines reaffirms our ability to connect with this version of Eden.

Transcendentalist Eden

I turn here to examining the ways in which Milton's portrayal of unity in Eden anticipates a transcendentalist conception of a connected universe. Scholars have noted, such as Rachel Griffis and Phyllis Cole, that transcendentalists looked to Milton's work to inspire

their moral systems and nonconformist attitudes. Griffis, for example, writes that, "[Ralph Waldo] Emerson admires Milton for his spiritual autonomy, for the independence of heart and mind to eschew church authority and to take responsibility for his own spirituality, tendencies Emerson himself also possessed" (4). While these studies serve to highlight the influence of Milton's protestant values on the American Romantics, the literary traditions these authors engaged with can be further explored in order to not just reveal Milton's role within the transcendentalist movement, but to also reveal a new perspective of Milton's conception of nature and the universe.

Milton's Eden is a personified being, or a collection of beings, that actively engages with Adam and Eve, rather than just being a space that they occupy. Vitalism has been at the core of ecocritical understandings of Milton's personified environment, including in the work of Leah Marcus. She explains that "Many early modern vitalists held that objects could experience emotions and sympathies, and that these ties could connect them even across considerable distances, as in the ties of bodies posited in alchemical and astrological proto-scientific thought" (14). She later notes of the material world, "generally, spirit is a refined form of matter, all creation partakes of spirit in varying degrees, and all created beings therefore have in varying degrees free will, the ability to perceive and make moral choices and the capacity to exert material agency" (Marcus "Ecocriticism and Vitalism" 25-6). This form of vitalism that Marcus is arguing is present in *Paradise Lost*, and I agree, accounts for a life force that runs through the natural world of Eden, but Milton's vitalism seems to go beyond scientific thought and into divine and spiritual thought. In comparing Eden in *Paradise Lost* to Emerson's advocated ideal universe, as Emerson is among the most influential of transcendentalist writers, I intend to show that Milton is also representing a

transcendental unity that is established through this shared divine spirit when he develops his harmonious notion of the universe.

In one of the most famous transcendentalist texts "Self-Reliance," Emerson argues that the self exists within the "ever-blessed ONE" of nature and that this should impact the way that humans interact with nature in order to justify our occupation of it:

> I see the same law working in nature for conservation and growth. Power is in nature the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself. The genesis and maturation of a planet, its poise and orbit, the bended tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and vegetable, are demonstrations of the self-sufficing, and therefore self-relying soul [...] As soon as the man is at one with God, he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends. (Self-Reliance 27)

This focus on the "genesis of a planet" and the "poise and orbit" is the same sort of cosmic harmony that Adam and Eve are repeatedly praising when they talk about God's creation of night and day. The reader is also incorporated into this harmonious universe; when we read the text of *Paradise Lost* we are providing a "vital resource" by giving it meaning, and this is providing a role that contributes to the self-relying system of the textual garden. Hence, when the reader's journey is merged with Adam and Eve's journey, despite the fact that they remain distinct from one another, Milton has created a transcendentalist world in which the reader serves to unite the in-text universe with the external universe into one integrated environment.

Moreover, Emerson is showing nature as an active body that is choosing what happens within itself, a representation of the environment that Milton first employs. What was previously identified as pathetic fallacy, Marcus explains as nature actually experiencing the emotions that are being attributed to it with her statement that "there is a dense

concentration of pastoral elements at the centre of *Paradise Lost* in Milton's depiction of the Garden of Eden, which is, among many other things, a grouping of natural and human organisms that coexist in mutual sympathy and reciprocity" (Marcus "Pathetic Fallacy" 24). To expand Marcus's reading, Milton shows this sympathy and reciprocity as a function of God and divinity within the garden. When Adam and Eve are proceeding toward their nightly rest in Book 4, nature is allowing them to participate in this process and permitting them to exist:

> Those Blossoms also, and those dropping Gumms,
> That lie bestrowne unsightly and unsmooth,
> Ask riddance, if we mean to tread with ease;
> Mean while, as Nature wills, Night bids us rest. (4.630-3)

Rather than saying that Adam and Eve need to remove the overgrown plants, the plants themselves are demanding that Adam and Eve tend to them in order to facilitate human life within the garden. This means that the garden has a dialogic relationship with humanity in which it provides for humans but requires that humans also provide for it. Even the harmonious patterning of night and day, which has previously been credited to God, is here shown to be nature's will. When engaging with the processes that nature has sanctioned, then, Adam and Eve are also engaging with God, and their praise for nature and their praise for God become muddled and overlapped. Milton personifies nature in a way that gives it the authority that Emerson would later outline, which shows that in addition to the vitalism Marcus sees in the text, there is a transcendental spirit that further unifies Eden and its human inhabitants.

The way that God constructs Eden to lead Adam and Eve, paralleled by Milton's construction of the textual Eden to lead the reader through it, is also a way that this landscape is reflecting transcendentalist conceptions of divinity. In another notable text where Emerson

explores the concept of unity, "The Over-Soul," he explains that "every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other" by the Over-soul. (3). Emerson's Over-soul is a unifying agent among men, but it is also an articulation of the pervasive divinity that exists within humanity. He writes, "as there is no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens, so is there no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins" (5). As Adam and Eve approach their bower, Adam expresses a similar notion in how different beings populate the Earth:

> Millions of spiritual Creatures walk the Earth
> Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:
> All these with ceasless praise his works behold
> Both day and night (4.677-80)

The idea that humans, Adam and Eve, occupy the same space as angels prefigures Emerson's belief that the human realm and the heavenly realm exist without clear boundaries between them. It is also notable that Adam focuses on sleep cycles and the day/night patterning, as this has been praised by Adam and Eve repeatedly as a display of God's perfect creation and the harmony that exists in Eden. By repeating this praise in this passage and highlighting the angelic residence within Eden, Milton is showing that divinity pervades human life just as transcendentalists later would believe.

The coexistence of heavenly and human life encompasses not just the in-text human life of Adam and Eve, as the presence of the reader in the text-scape also reveals the human reader to be surrounded by the angels that Adam is describing. Adam's speech continues with his discussion of the angelic voices that can be heard in the garden:

> Of echoing Hill or Thicket have we heard
> Celestial voices to the midnight air,
> Sole, or responsive each to others note
> Singing thir great Creator (4.681-4)

If the reader, through the act of reading, is occupying the hill or thicket that Adam is referring to—as my previous sections have argued—then it follows that the voices that are overheard by Adam and Eve would also be overheard by the reader. These celestial voices "lift our thoughts to Heaven," so that in addition to the reader coexisting in the text with these angels, the reader is also prompted to further consider the heavenly realm even when we are placed within a textual earthly landscape. While the act of navigating the text-scape aligns the experiences of Adam and Eve with the experiences of the reader, these discussions of divinity within the garden expand this relationship by uniting these human lives through that heavenly presence. This is not exactly the unification of souls that Emerson was discussing with his notion of the Over-soul, but it does seem that Milton is developing a similar notion of unification of humanity.

Understanding Milton's ecologies and environments has been at the forefront of recent contributions to scholarship on *Paradise Lost*, including examinations of the personification of the garden and Adam and Eve's role within the garden. By considering the role of the reader alongside Adam and Eve in the garden, I propose that a fuller understanding of the universe that Milton has developed through his writing becomes visible. This universe is one in which all agents—God, Adam and Eve, nature, and the reader—are unified and exist in harmony with one another. This reading allows Eden to be seen not just as a traditional paradisiacal space, but also a transcendentalist space. Identifying the seeds of transcendentalism in how Milton understands divinity and nature, provides a basis for further exploring and reflecting on the other transcendentalist ideals that are present in *Paradise Lost.* My following chapters build upon this framework in order to provide new insights into how materiality operates in Milton's epic.

CHAPTER TWO: EVE'S TRANSCENDENT FEMININITY

My first chapter examined notions of authority and author/reader relationships in *Paradise Lost* in an effort to understand the role of the reader in the larger textual universe that Milton is developing. By examining what I call the text-scape, I showed the disparities between the reader experience and the experience of Adam and Eve in existing within the prelapsarian Eden. Ultimately, I used this framework to show that the Edenic landscape that Milton depicts is an anticipation of the harmonious universe that transcendentalists believed in, with specific focus on the relationship between humanity and the rest of the universe. In my next chapter, I intend to build upon this foundation of Milton's transcendentalist universe in order to explore knowledge acquisition within *Paradise Lost*. I am particularly interested in the gendered implications for how transcendentalists conceived of education and the way that Eve, through her connection with nature that is fostered by her femininity, serves to subvert those expectations.

As the primary focus of this chapter is Eve's relationship to nature, I will start by outlining the scholarly conversations surrounding Eve's embodiment in relation to labor and knowledge that I will be engaging with. Then, in order to examine transcendentalist learning styles and knowledge acquisition in *Paradise Lost,* I will provide sources from transcendentalist texts that provide insight into the way that transcendentalists advocated for learning from and through nature. For the purposes and scope of this chapter, I have limited my analysis of transcendental texts to the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, as they are among the most influential transcendentalist writers. Many of Emerson's essays are regarded as seminal texts for transcendentalist ideals such as individuality and nonconformity. Whitman, who was in dialogue with Emerson throughout

his career, takes up many of these same transcendentalist ideals in his poetry. In both cases, these men write about how humans should interact with their surrounding environment in order to be closer to God and foster their education, but they are writing for other men. I will use this groundwork to then argue that the way Eve is shown interacting with nature is a sort of prototype for that transcendentalist learning style, but that it is her femininity that allows this. Reading Eve as a transcendentalist figure who prioritizes communion with nature allows her transgression in the fall to be read also as a moment of transcendence, or at least as an attempt on Eve's part to attain transcendentalist knowledge and foster a closer relationship with God and divinity.

One of the most significant discussions I am engaging with is that of how Milton is representing material embodiments within *Paradise Lost*, and specifically how Adam and Eve are embodied and interact with other earthly and divine bodies on the basis of their gender. Milton's monism has been a concern for scholars attempting to address materiality in the epic. D.B. Hart uses the primal matter from which God creates all things to explain how monism is operating in Milton's text. That is, Milton's monism is, "the oneness of the primary matter underlying the diversity of all its secondary manifestations constitutes also a continuity of substance between things and God, such that all substances are contained by the divine substance" (Hart 22). Hart uses Milton's monism to understand divine and angelic embodiment: "Milton's angels consume human fare, are nourished by it, and expel its residue [...] if all creation consists in various grades of one prime matter, and if the properties of the lower grades are possessed more perfectly by the higher, then spiritual beings must be capable of assuming inferior forms of materiality into their own substances" (23). This reading of Milton's monism sets the stage for several recent contributions to understanding

the relationships between Adam and Eve and the other forms of embodiments and the hierarchies that govern those relationships.

The consumptive and digestive habits of the angels have been taken up by several scholars following Hart. Jonathan Goldberg aims to “build on these explorations into Milton’s monism but focus on directions less frequently taken: on the one hand, toward questions of gender and sexuality; on the other hand, to possible antecedents in ancient materialist philosophy, in particular, Lucretius” (179). While Goldberg’s analysis is rooted in examining primarily male-male relationships and how oneness with God is achieved in those relationships through processes like digestion, he does conclude that the material hierarchies are what place Eve further away from God than Adam. Ann Gulden also writes about the importance of digestion and how it connects the angels to Adam and Eve through these bodily processes, but rather than focusing on Adam’s position in the hierarchy she discusses the connection between Raphael and Eve. She specifically investigates the link between food and knowledge by explaining that “Raphael, in the best pedagogical manner, uses what is to hand as context for his teaching. He takes the idea of food to explain the way towards a higher understanding via trans-substantiation” (138). This transubstantiation is performed by Eve when she prepares and processes the food for Raphael’s visit, showing Eve’s ability to transform material food into immaterial knowledge. My analysis builds on these readings of embodiment by adding that Milton shows Eve learning through her bodily connection to nature.

In addition to this ongoing dialogue regarding Eve’s embodiment and representations of food in the text, this chapter is also intervening in Milton’s portrayal of embodiment as it relates to unity. Milton’s monism provides one way of understanding how he sees the

relationship between the mind and the body, but rather than only using monism to refer to oneness between the mind and body, I also consider oneness between multiple beings. Melissa Welshans's work on hand holding in *Paradise Lost* has provided a thorough foundation for this endeavor. She writes that "When Adam and Eve are holding hands we see that, '[a]s indivisible soul and body, husband and wife move together in mutual accord'" (77). Once again, hierarchy plays a significant role in Welshans's reading as she examines the hierarchical associations of the relationship between husband and wife. She proposes that "'joint hands' becomes a synecdoche for monist marriage and the need to remain faithful to their soul's hierarchical order," and as such the unjoining of Adam and Eve's hands indicates "a process of disintegration destined to lead to their spiritual digression" (Welshans 85). My entrance into this conversation on Milton's monism is to interrogate notions of unity in Eden to reveal how Milton creates a transcendentalist character in Eve.

Central to this analysis are also discussions of nature's embodiment and representations of fertility. Just as my first chapter explored authorship and authority, this chapter examines creation and the authority one has over what they create. Kent Lehnhof explains that "Because God has authored everything, he is authorized to rule everything. The Father's primary role in the creation of the universe thus installs him in a position of supreme power over that universe" (16). He relates this principle to Adam and Eve's reproductive potential and that "Eve's fertility is, in fact, her defining feature" (Lehnhof 26). Stevie Davies writes of the knowledge gained by Adam and Eve in Book 7 that "Eve is granted the greater poetic miracle, to know by insight and to be reborn through that illumination. Through this timeless knowledge, she will become a home for new entities, taking on her role as 'mother of mankind'" (224). She also remarks of Milton's descriptions of the Earth and the birthing

imagery in Book 7, "Earth throughout this paragraph is described in terms appropriate to a woman's body" and recounts the notion of the "primal earth" in order to conclude that "the universe is recognisably human before humanity enters it" (Davies 225-7). In this chapter, I build upon this material connection between Eve and nature, or the Earth, to argue that creative and reproductive potential is linked to the nourishing capabilities of knowledge.

Finally, in exploring the various hierarchies that the above scholars are concerned with, it is useful to also outline the influence of vitalist materialist scholars on *Paradise Lost* scholarship. Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* proposes a particular form of vitalist materialism in which a vital force is found not just within human and nonhuman beings, but also in both organic and inorganic things. She writes, "My aspiration is to articulate a vibrant materiality that runs alongside and inside humans to see how analyses of political events might change if we gave the force of things more due" (viii). Her analysis of vitality in things has been a pivotal contribution to ecological materialist work, such as that of Leah Marcus who uses vitalist materialism to understand the ecology of *Paradise Lost* and the effects of the fall. Marcus works with a spectrum that she calls the vitalist matter-spirit continuum to refer to the refinement of matter as it becomes more spirituous. She proposes that "In its original context, of course, this sublimation up to 'vital Spirits' is offered as a possible trajectory for unfallen humanity, but the fact that Milton uses a natural flower to convey the continuum suggests that it is imbedded in natural process and may therefore be available to fallen humanity as well" ("Ecocriticism and Vitalism" 103-4). These discussions of materiality help to lay out the hierarchy I will be working with in this chapter; God maintains the highest rank on this hierarchy with the Earth beneath him, as it is composed of God's vital matter, and humans beneath that as they are composed of the dust of the earth. My analysis examines

Eve's place within this hierarchy and how she uses learning as a means of climbing that hierarchy.

Transcendentalist Education

My main concern with transcendentalist thought in this chapter is not just their methods for education, but also that transcendentalists viewed looking to nature to learn and obtain knowledge as a masculine trait. Showing how this phenomenon is at play within transcendentalist texts allows me to find similar representations of learning in *Paradise Lost*, but I argue that Milton's transcendentalist education is primarily obtained by Eve and not the male characters in the epic. While prominent transcendentalist thinkers like Emerson and Whitman may not have written explicitly that only men should live the lifestyles they were advocating for, they do distinctly address men in a way that excludes women from those experiences. In "Self-Reliance," Emerson writes:

> There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. (2)

Emerson is developing a relationship between the individual and the larger universe in which the process of learning does not reach its full potential until a man looks to his individual capabilities, and not to the work of men that came before him. The point in one's education where they work to reach that full potential is likened to working on a plot of land because individual power is being linked to nature. That education, however, is being restricted to only men, at least in Emerson's conception of it.

While Whitman is known for being slightly more progressive and including femininity more directly in some of his writings, the same sentiment of associating education

and a connection to nature with masculinity is echoed in his work. Many of the sections in his epic "Song of Myself" describe working, and one of the core themes of the work is Whitman recognizing his own relationship with nature. In Section 47, Whitman actually identifies himself as a teacher stating, "I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me? / I follow you whoever you are from the present hour, / My words itch at your ears till you understand them" (47.11-3). Here the act of teaching is being associated with movement, suggesting that while education occurs through dialogue, it should not be static or restricted to a room. This is reinforced by the later lines, "No shutter'd room or school can commune with me, / But roughs and little children better than they" (47.23-4). Although Whitman is teaching, he is also distancing himself from school as a physical location because a building would not allow for the wandering and motion that he prioritizes. It is within nature, then, that Whitman's ideal education would occur—which makes sense within an epic poem that asks its reader to walk with Whitman as they read. It is notable as well that Whitman chooses the word "commune" when discussing education; the spiritual and religious connotations of communion reflect the transcendentalist attitude toward the individual's connection to nature and how nature connects humans to God, as in the example of learning through nature.

Whitman is also subscribing to an ideal in which all of humanity is connected to one another by their transcendental souls. He shows this connection through knowledge as the information that Whitman provides to his reader, the content that he teaches, is composed of thoughts which he claims belong to all men, not just himself:

> These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original with me,
> If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing,
> If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are nothing,
> If they are not just as close as they are distant they are nothing.

> This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
> This the common air that bathes the globe. (17.1-6)

This is a unifying statement in which Whitman is expressing his connection with all other people and all other life, but he is still only identifying "men" as other life. Although it is likely that "men" here is being used as a synecdoche to refer to humanity—as is also likely in many contemporary transcendentalist texts—there is still a considerable bias in the choice to address men directly when attempting to speak for all of humanity. Even Whitman's descriptions of nature are at times masculinized, a subversion of most attempts to personify nature which do so through feminization: "Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and vital, / Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden" (29.5-6). The masculinization of the learner in conjunction with the masculinization of the setting in which they learn creates a notion that experiencing nature as a means for obtaining knowledge is a distinctly masculine experience.

For both Emerson and Whitman, there is also divinity within the various aspects of nature that they find themselves interacting with through their education, a representation of nature that Milton is also concerned with in his portrayal of the Garden of Eden. For Emerson this is still a more philosophical notion of seeing God in everyday life and knowing that God is omniscient in nature, whereas for Whitman—who bridges the romanticism of transcendentalism to realism—God exists in a very material way in the fibers that compose himself as well as the objects that surround him. Milton, in contrast, seems to be anticipating both of these approaches in *Paradise Lost.* The opening of Book 4 that initially brings us into the Garden of Eden describes it as:

> Natures whole wealth, yea more,
> A Heaven on Earth, for blissful Paradise
> Of God the Garden was, by him in the East

Of Eden planted (4.207-10)

Here we see that the garden is a divine space that acts as an earthly embodiment of God as it is "of God" and by him. Moreover, Book 7 explains that God, "And vital vertue infus'd, and vital warmth / Throughout the fluid Mass" (7.236-7) Milton is using insemination imagery in depicting God infusing his virtue into the dark matter. Based on the Milton's monism that unites his world through the common matter, and these lines that show how the creation of the Earth relies specifically on the the distribution of God's vital matter, I propose that God's presence in the world goes beyond conceptual omniscience; Milton's God is a material presence in the landscape of Eden. For all of these thinkers—Milton, Emerson, and Whitman—the term "nature" can be complicated by the polysemy of referring to nature as elements of the Earth and the natural world as well as to concepts such as human nature and the natural order; however, for the purposes of this chapter, I will try to use nature more specifically as the earthly, physical environment and the different beings and entities that compose that environment. This definition will help to explore the paradigm of human/nature relationships and the question of whether or not humans are a part of nature, or perhaps more appropriate for this chapter, how humans exist as a component of nature.

In addition to explaining the importance of the individual and nonconformity, these transcendentalists also deal with theological questions regarding the soul, divinity, and how God exists within the natural world, all of which seem to stem from Milton's influence in how he writes about nature. These questions are reflected in Emerson's work with his claim that "The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure, that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speaketh he should communicate, not one thing, but all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time,

souls, from the centre of the present thought; and new date and new create the whole" ("Self-Reliance" 22). Here humanity, represented by the soul, is being linked to the divine through God's omnipresence and omniscience. These ideas are also explored in "Nature" where Emerson asserts that reason and faith are both present in the human mind when we are in nature. He continues by explaining that when he is "standing on the bare ground," he becomes "a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God" ("Nature"). It is when Emerson is in nature that he can feel his body existing as a component of God.

Similarly, Whitman's theology is concerned with how God and divinity exist within the mundane physical world as well as in his own body. He writes, "Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from, / The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer, / This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds" (24.28-30). He is explaining that divinity is something that exists conceptually within himself and his soul, but also corporeally through his body parts. Divinity can be transferred from Whitman to other people as well as to objects because he is a part of the interconnected universe that allows him to speak for all men. Furthermore, Whitman also identifies the divinity that already exists in the material world outside of himself:

> I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,
> Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.
>
> Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
> I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
> In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,
> I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name,
> And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,
> Others will punctually come for ever and ever. (48.13-20)

He is proposing that divinity exists not just within every human, but in every mundane item. For Whitman, as well as for Emerson, extensions of God are present within material embodiments, and these extensions can be most fully realized and understood when the individual learns from nature, for nature also possesses this divinity.

I don't mean to discount notable female transcendentalists, but I am looking to Emerson and Whitman as they are some of the most influential voices in transcendentalist philosophy and poetry respectively, and therefore reflect some of the more widely accepted ideals within transcendentalist culture. It seems clear, then, that for these thinkers the call for people to reconvene with nature as a means of exploring their own goodness, potential, and divine power was directed primarily at men. The overarching unity that Milton creates with his own depiction of nature and Adam and Eve's position within Eden anticipates the kind of learning that these transcendentalists advocate for. However, not only is Eve being included in these moments of education, but at times her behaviors appear to be more in line with a transcendentalist conception of knowledge acquisition than Adam's. Several facets of Eve's story reveal this subversion of transcendentalist thought: first, Milton provides a more standard depiction of a personified nature and Earth that is feminized, allowing Eve to be more directly aligned with nature than Adam; second, there are moments where Eve is excluded from discourse that Adam partakes in, meanwhile Eve is said to be wandering or working in the garden; finally, Eve is the first to eat the forbidden fruit, a communion with nature that is explicitly tied to knowledge. Hence, showing where in *Paradise Lost* Milton is providing the framework for these transcendentalist texts—"Self-Reliance," "Nature," and "Song of Myself"—highlights the ideals and literary traditions shared by each of the authors,

as well as their divergence from those shared ideals and literary traditions and moments when they are being subverted.

Eve's Relationship to Nature: Labor and Embodiment

Knowledge and its acquisition is the primary concern of *Paradise Lost* as Milton is revisiting the fall of humanity to understand the pursuit of knowledge. The process of knowledge acquisition is shown in multiple ways: through discourse and through experiencing nature. In order to see how Milton is representing both of these knowledge acquisition methods, I will first investigate the way that he depicts Eve and nature with specific attention to their gendering. Eve's capacity to learn in *Paradise Lost* is intrinsically linked to her connection to nature in that Milton feminizes both of them through descriptions of female anatomy, as well as that Eve gains knowledge when she is performing labor within nature.

Although Adam and Eve are both human, they experience their embodiment differently. This can be seen when Eve and Adam each recount their memories from their first moments of life, in Books 4 and 8 respectively, there are several similarities in how they both woke up—"I first awak't, and found my self repos'd / Under a shade of flours" (4.450-1) and "As new wak't from soundest sleep / Soft on the flourie herb I found me laid" (8.253-4)—they are both placed among the flowers and therefore share the experience of their first memory being of nature. The way they each try to understand their existence, however, is varied. Eve follows the sound of water to a lake where she looks at her reflection in the water; while Adam also begins by taking in the sight of the world around him, and specifically the other creatures, when he turns his attention onto himself he explains, "My self I then perus'd, and Limb by Limb / Survey'd, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran /

With supple joints, as lively vigour led" (8.267-9). Adam looks to his own embodiment and examines his physical limbs, while Eve looks to a representation of her embodiment that nature is providing. Additionally, Eve wonders "what" she is, and Adam asks "who" he is (4.452; 8.270); this suggests that even though both questioned how they came into being, Adam seems to understand innately that he possesses personhood in the form of individual identity, whereas Eve's question targets the very essence of her being and body. Because Eve is looking to an earthly element, water, to answer her question of "what" she is, she is being positioned directly as a component of nature as opposed to Adam's experience, which can be more appropriately explained as positioning him within nature.

Not only is Milton showing Eve more thoroughly as an embodiment of nature than Adam, but nature is being explicitly gendered as female. When Satan first reaches Earth he is described to be approaching the border, "Of Eden, where delicious Paradise, / Now nearer, Crowns with her enclosure green" (4.132-3). In addition to referring to Eden as "her," the green imagery implies fertility, a sentiment that is repeated through mentions of fruit-bearing trees and the garden being fruitful. Nick Pici writes of this representation of Eden that, "Milton's Edenic Earth, in its essential qualities and inherent values, can be seen as not too unlike Earth proper," as it is a world of "fertility and abundance [...] conditions that are not unlike those of any real, unspoiled, life-sustaining ecosystem on Earth" (38). This fertility is paralleled in descriptions of Eve; Milton is forging a relationship between Mother Earth and Eve Mother of Mankind. Book 5 expands upon this relationship between Eve and nature by associating fertility with nourishment. When praying before beginning their morning work, Adam and Eve call attention to the four elements stating:

> Aire, and ye Elements the eldest birth
> Of Natures Womb, that in quaternion run

> Perpetual Circle, multiform; and mix
> And nourish all things, let your ceasless change
> Varie to our great Maker still new praise. (5.180-184)

The elements are the fruit of nature's womb, and they are also the components which feed and sustain all life on Earth. In the identification of this "perpetual circle," Milton is showing the earth to be a vast generative being with creative power that is second only to the "great Maker" who first created it. Lehnhof writes that "according to the schema Milton elaborates in the poem, one masters what one makes" (16). By that principle, Milton is granting authority to nature in being the creative source for the world as well as being the source for the products that sustain the world. While both God and nature are providing similar functions of creation, nature's creation relies on the feminization established by Milton's womb imagery.

Nature's generative and creative power is not being restricted to earthly beings; when Milton writes that the earth's elements "nourish all things," those things include heavenly and divine bodies. Later, when preparing to be visited by Raphael, Adam instructs Eve to go gather fruit from the garden:

> Our Heav'nly Stranger, well we may afford
> Our givers thir own gifts, and large bestow
> From large bestowd, where Nature multiplies
> Her fertil growth, and by disburd'ning grows
> More fruitful, which instructs us not to spare. (5.316-20)

Here, the fruit that is being prepared for Raphael is not just responsible for earthly nourishment, but angelic nourishment as well. This act of communion among Adam and Eve and Raphael reflects a larger unity in which the materiality of the fruit connects the various bodies to nature through sustenance. Goldberg makes a similar observation that "eating together in what becomes a transformation like that in which food loses its material property

of one kind to become another, feeding the vital processes of life" (193). In his reading, food possesses a vital matter that is incorporeal and shared by all living things. This vital matter is a part of the "one matter" from which all things are formed, and this reflects the hierarchies of different beings and characters within *Paradise Lost*. According to Goldberg, this hierarchy is "undeniably, one in which Eve is placed lower and further away from God than is Adam" (193). This may well be true, but it is also one in which Eve is placed much closer to nature, insofar as nature can be conceptualized as a single body, than Adam, and therefore she is closer to this powerful being who is granted the opportunity to function in both the earthly and heavenly realms.

Eve's proximity to nature, or Earth, on this hierarchy is due to several implications of embodiment. First, there is a shared biology between Eve and Earth as they are both characterized by their fertile wombs:

> Haile Mother of Mankind, whose fruitful Womb
> Shall fill the World more numerous with thy Sons
> Then with these various fruits the Trees of God
> Have heap'd this Table. (5.388-91)

Just as nature is charged with nourishing all things through the elements of its womb, Raphael tells Eve that she will be responsible for peopling the Earth with the products of her womb. In both cases, God is used as a benchmark measurement for generative power. While nature's creative ability was subordinate to God's, Raphael suggests that Eve's generative power may transcend nature's by comparing her sons to nature's fruit, thus complicating the hierarchy between these beings. In any case, if we are compelled by the belief that the maker maintains authority over that which it makes, it is the physical anatomy of the womb that allows both Eve and nature to claim the authority that is offered to them when God tasks them with creation.

In addition to this biological similarity, however, Eve and Earth are also being aligned in larger processes of nourishment and sustenance. The children that Eve will one day have are being compared to the fruit that the Earth has produced. This fruit has been gathered by Eve, meaning that in both providing food for Raphael and providing people to occupy the garden, these provisions are only achieved through Eve's labor. The Earth is responsible for providing the vital nutrients that sustain life, and Eve is responsible for providing the bodies that will perpetuate the cycle of these nutrients being passed through the material hierarchy through processes of digestion. While Adam is also needed for procreation, he is not being credited in the birthing of the sons that will fill the world. Hence, Eve is so closely intertwined with nature that these natural life cycles are dependent upon her, and these life cycles are rooted in the creative power that Eve and nature share with God.

In discussing Eve's labor it must be noted that there are moments in which Milton shows Adam and Eve performing different tasks or performing them at different times. This phenomenon is especially visible in Book 5 as Adam's instructions for Eve to gather the fruit has several implications for the division of labor in *Paradise Lost.* Ann Gulden has examined this Book and Eve's act of processing knowledge, which she cites as a link between Raphael and Eve, but I want to shift focus onto how this link is destabilized when Adam and Raphael exclude Eve from discourse. Instead, Eve spends time working within nature, which is a crucial step in her acquisition of knowledge.

One way that the gendered division of labor is presented in this chapter is through the division of general labor and discourse. When God sends Raphael to go talk to Adam, not the unit of Adam and Eve, he is told, "Thou find'st him from the heat of Noon retir'd, / To respit his day-labour with repast, / Or with repose; and such discourse bring on" (5.231-3). While

labor and knowledge are not mutually exclusive concepts, these lines do set them in opposition with one another by suggesting that discourse should be brought on in the respite of labor. In illuminating this division between labor and knowledge, Milton also illuminates the role of hierarchy in the distribution of labor. When God grants Adam access to discourse with Raphael, he is separating the activities of Adam and Eve for that time. Subsequently, Adam further separates them by telling Eve to prepare fruit for Raphael. When Eve leaves to gather the fruit as requested by Adam, readers are pulled in two directions and prompted to follow both Eve in her labor and Adam as, "Mean while our Primitive great Sire, to meet / His god-like Guest, walks forth, without more train" (5.350-1). By allowing the reader to follow both Adam and Eve when they separate, one pursuing labor and one pursuing discourse, we are made aware of the circumstances that prevent Eve from accessing the same information that is being passed on to Adam.

Meanwhile, although Adam's instructions exclude Eve from discourse, she is finding other ways to foster communion with Raphael. Eve's role is that "She gathers, [...] She crushes, [...] She tempers" (5.343-7). This list of tasks reveals the work that Eve is actively performing instead of being included in Adam and Raphael's conversation. Eve is only addressed one other time in the remainder of the book: to praise her womb, another reference to her labor. This works to reinforce the dichotomy between discourse and labor as, at the same time that Adam must prepare for discourse only during his rest from work, Eve must work during Adam's rest and be excluded from discourse. Gulden further explains the link between Eve and Raphael as being forged through the establishment of frugality in the text. Because frugality is an important theme to the text, according to John Guillory, "Eve's primary role in the exercise of frugality is of central importance; she even engages in an

exchange with an angel in performance of this exercise" (Gulden 140). Even though Gulden's reading of this moment calls attention to the labor that is performed by Eve, it must also be noted that this labor simultaneously and somewhat paradoxically distances Eve from the masculine dialogue being carried out while it constructs this relationship between Eve and Raphael. Therefore, Eve is allowed to commune with the angels, but this communion can only be achieved through her work. This is a function of the hierarchies the text depicts. Adam is closer to God and the angels than Eve is, which allows him to have direct verbal communication with the angels; Eve is closer to nature which allows her to obtain the knowledge and relationships that Adam also obtains, but she must first commune with nature in carrying out these tasks.

Transcendentalist Eve

Reading Eve's actions in the garden in contrast to Adam and Raphael's discourse reveals Eve's nonconformity to the methods of learning Raphael provides. Based on the transcendentalist ideals outlined earlier in this chapter, we can understand Eve's labor as representative of Emerson's expectation for how men should carry themselves. Emerson expresses his own comfort in his nonconformity by stating, "Few and mean as my gifts may be, I actually am, and do not need for my own assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony" ("Self-Reliance" 8). In this way he is almost denouncing discourse, the method of learning that Adam relies on. If we are reading this idea of "second testimony" as a form of discourse, Emerson also calls upon the discourse/labor dichotomy in the following statement, "And, of course, so much force is withdrawn from your proper life. But do your work, and I shall know you. Do your work, and you shall reinforce yourself. A man must consider what a blindman's-buff is this game of conformity" ("Self-Reliance" 10). Emerson

privileges work as a method of reinforcing one's identity and role in the world, and Eve's performance of labor reinforces her identity as a component of nature.

Even before this statement on work, Emerson references "dead churches" and "dead bibles," suggesting that only attending an institution is simple conformity and not a true expression of faith. When Eve performs her labor, then, she is distancing herself from testimonies and institutions to follow and instead displaying her own virtues. For example, Eve brings "Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change" when she is choosing the fruit to gather (5.336). Eve knows how to choose the fruit that is best for Raphael as well as the optimal fruit to be plucked without disrupting nature because her relationship with nature gives her the knowledge of those standards, and not because those standards were told to her. In spite of knowing that only a small harvest is necessary, Eve follows Adam's orders, but the labor that Adam prompts gives Eve the opportunity to exercise her reliance on her own knowledge and capabilities, which is the behavior that Emerson later praises. At the core of Emerson's argument, however, is the assumption, "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist" ("Self-Reliance" 7). On the basis that Eve performs her labor as a function of her femininity, she is subverting Emerson's expectations, which perhaps makes her even more of a nonconformist.

It is also this communion with nature, and Eve's particular role in that communion, that allows the fall to happen in the first place. In addition to spending time in nature to perform labor, Eve is also shown wandering in nature alone, as is the case leading up to her eating the fruit. After Satan has attempted to manipulate Eve specifically, as in her dream in Book 4, it becomes necessary to his plot to have Adam and Eve separated. Prior to the separation, Adam states, "These paths & Bowers doubt not but our joynt hands / Will keep

from Wilderness with ease, as wide / As we need walk" (9.244-6). The imagery of the joined hands is one that is repeated throughout the epic as Adam and Eve often walk hand in hand, but at the moment of their separation Milton writes, "Thus saying, from her Husbands hand her hand / Soft she withdrew" (9.385-6). Not only are readers asked to face the implication of their hands coming unjoined, but by utilizing enjambment to separate "Soft she withdrew" from the depiction of the hands onto another line, we immediately feel the isolation that Eve feels. Eve is not only withdrawing her hand, but entirely withdrawing from Adam's company, and the reader is led to withdraw with her.

Although this hand holding imagery has been documented by Welshans with the explanation that the joining of hands is symbolic of a repeated marital commitment, rather than only using hand holding to explore the husband/wife hierarchy, I want to explore the role hand holding plays in the text's other hierarchies that include Adam and Eve, God, and nature. By highlighting the use of hand holding not only between Adam and Eve, but between Eve and other bodies when she is separated from Adam, I argue that Milton is providing Eve with her own means of getting closer to God within these hierarchies. When Eve fosters her own relationship with nature, she is paradoxically reaching a sort of transcendence that foregrounds her own connection to divinity even in light of her separation from Adam being indicative of her disobedience.

The hand imagery is revisited at the moment of the fall as an articulation of Eve's disunion from Adam. While the marital union that Adam and Eve represent is not necessarily the form of unity that transcendentalists would ultimately refer to when thinking about humanity being united with nature and the larger universe, their union has come to reflect an ideal harmony in Eden. Adam states that "These paths & Bowers doubt not but our joynt

hands / Will keep from Wilderness with ease, as wide / As we need walk" which emphasizes the symbolic hands in Adam and Eve's work to maintain the garden (9.244-6). There is also a balance in the imagery of the paths they walk being only as wide as necessary to fit them walking side-by-side with joined hands. Thus, the isolation of Eve's hand from Adam's is a prominent moment of disunion that clues us in to the fact that tragedy is about to occur. This is emphasized with the line "Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat," the actual act of transgression occurs here in a single phrase at the end of the line. After already unsettling the reader by separating the hands, we must now follow Eve's hand as it reaches for the fruit over the course of reading this line, stretching us toward the pivotal moment of the fall. Even so, this instance of disunion between Adam and Eve allows for a new moment of union between Eve and nature. By not holding Adam's hand, Eve is now free to join hands with nature, an image that is evoked through Milton's focus on her outstretched hand moving to grab the apple—the apple here being a stand in for the closest thing that nature can outstretch from the limb of the tree of knowledge in order to join hands with Eve. The image of Eve side by side with Adam joined hand-in-hand is effectively replaced with the image of Eve side by side with the tree joined fruit-in-hand.

The disjoining of Adam and Eve's hands gives them the opportunity to wander through the garden in ways that their union prevented; this movement allows for the fall but also allows the tragedy to be reclaimed and read in a positive light. Welshans and Stanley Fish have explored this movement, and they both link physical motion to spiritual motion in highlighting Adam and Eve's capacity to go astray or wander. Fish argues that wandering begins as a word without strong moral connotation, and that it initially "has the force of promenade or stroll," but that through the epic gains a negative imperative in being

associated with Satan's movement toward Eden which develops the connotation of wandering from God (*Surprised by Sin* 131). Alternatively, there are instances where wandering is used as a "movement of faith" (Fish *Surprised by Sin* 141). Ultimately, Fish analyzes several uses of the term "wandering," which carries varied moral implications depending on the context and the particular figures doing the wandering. He concludes that "Under Providence, through the medium of faith, the word is able to include all its meanings, even those which are literally contradictory, and is thus returned, after many permutations, to its original purity and innocence" (*Surprised by Sin* 141). In the same way that Welshans claims that Adam and Eve can go astray when they are separated from one another, they, and especially Eve, grow prone to wandering in their separation. If we agree with Fish's reading that wandering can be at once detrimental and pure, we can see how Eve's wandering leads to her transgression, yet also allows her to embrace the earth that surrounds her and her connection with it in a way that steers us toward the notion of the "fortunate fall" that *Paradise Lost* is said to be telling the story of.

The Transcendentalist Fall

Felix culpa philosophy has been at the core of conversations surrounding *Paradise Lost* as the epic's conclusion addresses the positive potential for Adam and Eve after they have been banished from Eden. In reading Eve as a proto-transcendentalist figure who represents the embodied connection between humanity and the Earth and who acquires knowledge by fostering this relationship with nature, I propose that the fall of humanity can also be a paradoxically transcendentalist act. While Eve's consumption of the fruit is an act of disobedience, it is also an act of learning as well as an attempt to physically incorporate nature further into her own body. Using the outline of Eve's character and the way that she

exists with an affinity to her surrounding nature above, I here investigate the moments leading up to the fall and how they are Eve's attempts to explore knowledge through nature as she has done throughout the epic.

When Eve does begin to wander astray after separating from Adam in Book 9, her isolation leads to Satan highlighting her femininity. Satan is hoping to find Adam and Eve apart from each other and, "Eve separate he spies, / Veild in a Cloud of Fragrance, where she stood, / Half spi'd, so thick the Roses bushing round" (9.424-6). This image of Eve emphasizes her positioning within nature by referencing the flowers that surround her. In addition to highlighting Eve's relationship with nature, later in this same passage the serpent notes Eve's femininity:

> Such Pleasure took the Serpent to behold
> This Flourie Plat, the sweet recess of Eve
> Thus earlie, thus alone; her Heav'nly forme
> Angelic, but more soft, and Feminine,
> Her graceful Innocence (9.455-9)

This emphasis returns our attention to the fact that Eve's close proximity to, and ability to be aligned with, nature is a distinct facet of her femininity. The serpent contrasts heaven and earth by referencing Eve's "heavenly form" but that she is more soft and feminine than the angels. This suggests purity in the sense that Eve has the capacity to be corrupted, but she also has the capacity to learn. The serpent takes advantage of Eve's identity of being heavenly and innocent but also an earthly being in order to tempt her. This depiction of temptation that leads her to eating the fruit as a means of gaining knowledge is one that is made possible through Eve's repeated communion with nature.

When Satan tempts Eve in Book 9, it is under the promise that if she eats the forbidden fruit her connection to God, in hierarchical terms, would be strengthened. Satan

falsely explains to Eve that he has eaten the fruit and it has made him a man inside of his serpent body, and that similarly if she eats the fruit "ye shall be as Gods" (9.708). This hierarchical bond is now materially reinforced through both Eve's association with nature and the connection between the physical fruit and the gaining of knowledge. In her analysis of the link between material and immaterial, Gulden notes, "Eating and the pursuit of knowledge are linked activities in the epic," but I want to add that that which is learned in the act of consuming the fruit of knowledge is not just an abstract or conceptual notion of knowledge, knowledge itself is manifested into the corporeal being of the apple (138). Eating is established as a material and bodily process in *Paradise Lost*, as explained in Raphael's discourse with Adam, but is just as easily categorized as an epistemological process. Using the foundations from Book 7 that "Knowledge is as food," we can see that nourishment and wisdom are connected, but in some ways they can be more fully conflated as we proceed with the fall in Book 9 (7.126). The consumption of the fruit, the act that causes the fall of humanity, is a moment of bodily nourishment. But the fruit being consumed is a product of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thus the fruit itself is also a material entity that embodies knowledge. When the fruit is eaten, that material entity is incorporated into the body as shown through Eve's plan to "grow mature / In knowledge" by eating a diet supplemented by the forbidden fruit (9.803-4). The fruit would simultaneously develop Eve's body and mind, which she believes would bring her closer to being, "as the Gods who all things know" (9.804). Thus, the act of further incorporating nature into her own being by digesting the fruit would allow Eve to climb the hierarchy to get closer to God.

The imagery of God creating the Earth from his vital matter and creating a material entity that possesses divinity is reflective of a transcendentalist view of the universe. When

Whitman, for example, is articulating the divinity that exists within himself and his body, he also writes, “I believe in the flesh and the appetites, / Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle” (24.26-7). By referencing appetites alongside flesh and explaining that both of these things are miracles, he is creating a similar relationship between nourishment and divinity as Milton. Miracles are supposed to be unexpected and extraordinary events, yet Whitman claims that they occur just in the existence of the body and digestive processes. This is indicative of a worldview in which everyday life reflects transcendence, and for both Whitman and Milton transcendence is being offered through nourishment. When Milton’s work is set in dialogue with Whitman in this way, it shows that Eve is engaging with this transcendental universe. Meaning, she is taking the ideal of learning from nature and turning it into a material reality through the ingestion of knowledge.

It is only through her transgression that Eve believes she can truly transcend as the other knowledge she is granted is limited despite God having said that he has provided them everything they need in Paradise. God’s prohibition of the fruit is a fortification of the conflation of immaterial knowledge and material food. When he places restrictions on what can be consumed, he simultaneously places restrictions on what can be learned. The restriction on what can be learned is expressed to Adam and Eve when Raphael starts his conversation with Adam. He tells him that he has come “to answer thy desire / Of knowledge within bounds” (7.119-20). While my earlier readings of Raphael’s visit have been to highlight the differences between Adam and Eve’s roles in hosting their guest, this line reveals that Adam and Eve have been placed within bounds that cannot be transcended, which helps to explain why the promise of knowledge was effective in tempting Eve in Book 9. Information beyond what Raphael tells Adam is that “which th’ invisible King, / Onely

Omniscient hath supprest in Night" (7.122-3); it is the information that is only accessible through physical incorporation into nature—or incorporation of nature into the self which Eve performs.

Although the transgression is a fall from grace, it is ironically one that seems to bring Adam and Eve closer to God, or perhaps humanity closer to God. While they learn that they cannot become gods, as Satan promises, they are prompted to reflect on their disobedience and the newfound grace they are shown from God. Even the tragedy loses some of its tragic force when Adam is told, "for then the Earth / Shall all be Paradise, far happier place / Then this of *Eden*, and far happier daies (12.463-5). Humanity is still granted Paradise on Earth, which also suggests a close relationship with God even after disobeying him and being cast out of Eden. This relationship relies on Milton's projection of his timeline into the future, a phenomenon that has also been observed by Mandy Green. By providing Adam and Eve the insight of their future generations' happiness, Milton has shown that in spite of the tragedy Eve may have caused for herself and for Eden, she has kickstarted a process that will still bring prosperity to humanity. Thus, Eve is successful in fostering a transcendentalist ideal relationship between humanity and the divine.

It is also significant to Eve's transcendentalist narrative that the epic's closing still centers learning and reinforces the gendered learning that has permeated the text so far. Michael tells Adam that "This having learnt, thou hast attained the summe / Of wisdom; hope no higher," but instructs him to "add Faith, / Add vertue, Patience, Temperance, add Love" (12.575-6; 12.582-3). It is this added knowledge that ensures that when Adam and Eve leave Eden they will still be able to possess "A Paradise within thee, happier farr" (12.587). In this way, Eve did achieve a form of transcendence in her education: the concept of having

Paradise within oneself seems to anticipate the Whitmanian ideal that man is divine inside and out. It is significant, then, that Michael is speaking only to Adam. While we eventually learn that Eve has been granted the same information that we have witnessed being granted to Adam, she is once again excluded from discourse, this time by Michael, and forced to experience her education rather than just talk about it. The angels have repeatedly withheld direct access to their knowledge from Eve, so she relies on the divinity found in her everyday life rather than on conversations with other prominent figures. This is a fortification of the claim that, of the couple, Eve is the transcendentalist figure who learns from nature, as the information given in this final book was only given in light of the fall Eve caused, and self-reliance, as Eve learns through a dream instead of conversation.

In comparing the literary traditions present in *Paradise Lost* and transcendentalist works such as "Song of Myself" and Emerson's essays, two key archetypes come to the forefront: the personification of nature and the act of learning through nature. Each of these archetypes seem to be distinctly gendered, but in different ways according to either Milton or the transcendentalists. Although Whitman may be subverting expectations by masculinizing nature, we can just as easily say that Milton is subverting expectations by allowing Eve to perform this transcendental femininity. Rather than thinking of Milton as the single and direct predecessor of transcendentalism, we can more appropriately think of him as a single step in a longstanding tradition of nature writing and poetry that describe the relationship between humanity and nature. This tradition is one that transcendentalists also take up, thus Milton becomes a moment of subversion of a shared convention. When using the precedents set by these literary conventions and analyzing those moments of subversion, I suggest that Milton is gesturing toward proto-transcendentalist knowledge acquisition methods that reveal

larger implications for the material hierarchies and representations of divinity in *Paradise Lost.*

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CHAPTER THREE: REINCARNATION AND REINCORPORATION IN *PARADISE LOST*

My previous two chapters have explained the human/nature dynamics present in *Paradise Lost* as representative of transcendentalist ideals of unity and individual divinity. While my previous chapter explored questions of transcendental knowledge and Eve's particular association with nature through material embodiment, this chapter aims to build upon that framework in order to explore how bodies and souls function in this larger transcendentalist universe of Eden. Among the core doctrines in Christianity are resurrection and salvation. Although *Paradise Lost* is only concerned with retelling Genesis and the fall of humanity, these same themes arise in the text. In addition to the overall structure of the epic being reflective of redemption, Adam and Eve have multiple experiences with or questions about death that reveal the complicated and at times unstable understanding they have of death. The relationship between life and death is being muddled by the different forms of life present in Eden and the ways that Adam and Eve interact with them. By the time Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden, they have experienced death in the form of the fall, yet they are able to continue their life cycles and pursue new life in the world and thus experience a kind of reincarnation. This reincarnation, however, is one that relies on material reincorporation into another body or system that seems to be an anticipation of the particular kind of reincorporation that Walt Whitman depicts in "Song of Myself."

In reading the two epics alongside each other, similarities in how each text understands death arise; these varied explorations of the concept of death provide insight into transcendentalist life cycles and processes of reincorporation that are present in both texts. My initial inspiration for this project was sparked by discussion in a Milton-focused class

with Dr. Susan Staub. Throughout that semester I found myself making connections between *Paradise Lost* and transcendentalist texts I had studied before. Ultimately, I was prompted to write on some of the topics covered here in a project for that course. My original work with this topic was rooted in issues of temporality and identifying in Milton's work the way transcendentalists experienced time as well as the influence of carpe diem poetry, which led to a brief examination of cyclicality and reincarnation. This chapter aims to expand that work by exploring materiality more in depth in order to show a proto-transcendentalist impulse in how Milton regards life and death as well as bodily reincorporation into the Earth. By first examining discussions of death in both texts, I will show that Whitman and Milton are each working to destabilize the boundary between life and death. Once the concept of death has been deconstructed, I will explore the implications for corporeal and incorporeal reincarnation in *Paradise Lost* in order to argue that the redemptive processes Milton describes, while they are salvific, are not simply spiritually regenerative—as has been suggested by Mandy Green and Ayelet Langer—but a cyclical function of the body as well.

While redemption has been a focus within Milton studies as it is both a paramount issue within Christian theology and the action which allows for the justification of the ways of God to man, it is primarily discussed in more abstract terms as a function of divinity and grace rather than a physical reality. Mandy Green examines patterns of regeneration in the final books of *Paradise Lost* through Milton's effort to "propel his narrative forward through time and beyond to eternity" (661). By revealing to Adam the future of his offspring and the fate of humanity, Milton depicts a cycle of the lapse of humanity and the renewal of God's salvation. This cycle being projected through time and into the future brings "Adam and Eve into the same pattern of typological fulfilment, moving from death to new life [...] Since

Adam and Eve are the only extant examples of mankind, they represent both corrupt humanity in their Fall and, as their offensiveness to God is washed away in a flood of tears, the faithful in their regeneration" (Green 662). Green is drawing attention to the way that Adam and Eve are representative of all of humanity as a means of portraying regeneration as it is offered to humanity, and not just to Adam and Eve despite them being the only humans actually present in the text. While I agree with her use of Adam and Eve to depict a cycle that persists throughout human history, I want to expand upon this cycle and argue that the redemptive cycle is not just something that happens to humanity; it is also enabled by humanity and of human embodiment as it functions within the material connections throughout the natural world Milton has created in his writing.

Ayelet Langer draws attention to some of the same principles as Green of temporality and regeneration, but her approach specifically focuses on the time structure of grace in the epic. Langer examines at length Milton's *aevum,* "a formulation, or kind of logic, that builds durations of the divine and the human into the same structure" (2). She argues that there are two time structures in *Paradise Lost*: that of the narrative of the fall and that of the regeneration of grace. The inclusion of both produces a "technique of 'nesting' time within time" that bridges the finite and the infinite within the text (Langer 19). This means that grace as a concept coincides with the way that grace is understood and experienced by the human mind, and this is depicted in the way that God is infinitely present even after the fall. As is noted by Green, Langer also highlights the way that Milton projects his narrative into the future and how Adam's view of the future reflects the bridging of the narrative timeline which Adam exists within and the infinite timeline that God occupies. She concludes that grace is a "dynamic, creative force, which is no less human than it is divine" and that Adam

and Eve understand that grace is “a regenerative, formative power” (40). Once again, Langer provides useful insight into how regeneration operates in the mode of divinity in *Paradise Lost*, but I intend to build upon the binary she is working within of finite/infinite to highlight a material infinitude present within the universe of the epic that is contrasted with a bodied finitude. Rather than simply nesting time within time, Milton is also nesting life within death and death within life.

Stevie Davies has also notably contributed to conversations about life cycles in *Paradise Lost* with focus on motherhood and reproduction. She posits that Milton’s use of the phrase “kindly rupture” in Book 7, “characterises Milton's treatment of the Fall as fortunate (heretically inclining though that idea may be)—the Fall as a birth” (Davies 223). She proceeds with the claim that, in leaving Paradise, Eve is “hatched into the future with the certainty of fruitfulness. It constitutes, therefore, at the end of the poem, a return to Genesis [...] . Book 12 returns to Book 7, which again returns to Book 1, regenerating” (224). Davies thoroughly examines the creation story told in Book 7 and the role of feminization and maternity in Milton’s text, but her work provides another perspective of the narrative structure of *Paradise Lost* and the theme of regeneration. Using the basis Davies has provided, I will examine the fall of humanity in terms of both life and death and to then understand how material life processes are being influenced by the event.

Additionally, interpretations of the Earth’s personification and the garden’s experience and response to the fall will provide further insight into how life and death exist in the garden as well as how life and death are changed by the fall. Richard DuRocher proposes that the personification of the Earth, “extends the scope of the Fall from a human to a cosmological event” and that this is made possible by “Milton's economical poetic

utterance: 'Earth felt the Wound'" (94-5). Ken Hiltner is also concerned with the role of wounding in *Paradise Lost,* of humans and nature, and offers that "The wounds are unusual in that something of consequence emerges from them. In most narrative accounts of wounds, what is of highest importance is what leads up to the wounding, the wounding itself, and the consequences to the wounded" (114). Hiltner uses this close reading of wounding in the epic to understand the connection between humans and the Earth. This chapter builds upon this significance of the wounded Earth in relation to the larger system of life Milton has created in Eden by examining how wounds destabilize the boundary between life and death.

While Green, Langer, and Davies's works provide a useful avenue into exploring other structures and patterns of regeneration of humanity, I want to think more specifically about reincarnation and reincorporation as regenerative processes of the individual being and body in *Paradise Lost.* Before going in depth into physical reincorporative processes in Milton's text, I find it useful to first investigate the concepts of life and death in both "Song of Myself" and *Paradise Lost.* The connections drawn between each text's treatment of life and death will illuminate the Whitmanian processes of reincorporation of bodies throughout life and death cycles that I propose Milton is anticipating. Furthermore, expanding the wound analyses offered by DuRocher and Hiltner aids in illuminating the way that injury and death exist in nonhuman bodies, which is important to understanding how death and reincorporation occur in the larger Edenic world. It is the transcendental unity among the various life forms in Milton's universe, which I explore more in depth in my previous chapters, that afford for reading Adam and Eve's experiences as processes of dying and regeneration.

Deconstructing Death

Whitman's "Song of Myself" establishes the transcendentalist ideals of a united universe which connects humanity to nature and divinity. He discusses his own connection to the world around him and how he was made from the same components that also forge the rest of the natural world. In the opening section of the poem, Whitman writes "My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air, / Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same" (1.6-7). He introduces an almost clinical tone in naming body parts and atoms of blood, but pairs this clinicality with the romanticism that his body was created from soil and air. He reinforces the unity of this imagery by then referencing multiple generations that came before him and were also made from the same components. Representations of unity such as this one are found throughout the fifty-two section poem which proceeds to catalog numerous identities and experiences beyond Whitman's personal life while claiming to be a "song of [him]self." In addition to this transcendental unity in life, however, Whitman also explores how that unity persists in death. In using the motif of a blade of grass—the poem itself is situated in his larger work *Leaves of Grass*—Whitman analyzes his own connection to nature and what happens to the interconnected bodies in the world as they break down after death, or rather as they break down into new life.

"Song of Myself" opens with Whitman explaining that he is watching a blade of grass. His observation is what prompts him to ask questions regarding his own being, life, and death, and he invites his reader to walk with him as he explores these questions. He asserts that he is embarking on this journey and this project and "Hoping to cease not till death" (1.9). Death, however, is portrayed in contradicting ways throughout the rest of the text. At times, Whitman seems to be concerned with his inevitable death. The poem is

structured in a way to reflect time passing, as the ending is approached there are lines that suggest a day is ending. In Section 51, Whitman asks, “Who has done his day’s work? who will soonest be through with his supper? / Who wishes to walk with me?” (51.10-1). The references to finished work and eating supper indicate that we have reached the end of the day, but these lines are followed by two more questions: “Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?” (51.12). These last two questions imply that Whitman feels he is running out of time to speak with his reader, or specifically that he is reaching the end of his life.

All of this exists, contradictorily, alongside Whitman’s claim that there is not truly any such thing as death. Whitman is not necessarily trying to claim that bodies do not experience death, but rather trying to reframe our understanding of death and proposing that what we think of as death is actually a form of life. This understanding of life and death as communicated through grass is the focus of Section 6 in which Whitman responds to a child’s question “What is the grass?” (6.1). He admits that he does not know the answer before pondering a few possibilities of what the grass is, including “Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation” and “now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves” (6.7; 6.12). In these offered explanations, grass is encompassing life and death as well as youth and age, but this only leads Whitman to more questions, which he once again sets out to answer:

> What do you think has become of the young and old men?
> And what do you think has become of the women and children?
>
> They are alive and well somewhere,
> The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
> And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
> And ceas’d the moment life appear’d. (6.25-30)

Whitman has proposed that the entire life cycle is captured by grass, starting with a child and proceeding toward old men and women. In spite of thinking of the grass as a feature of graves for people who have died, he still maintains that "they are alive and well somewhere." Grass, then, represents those graves just as it proves that "there is really no death." For Whitman, this is not just the notion that life in general goes on even after an individual has died, nor is it just the belief that one's soul lives on after the death of the body. It is instead a scientific view of the way a body breaks down after death and how the nutrients of that body then return to the Earth to eventually provide for new life forms. His perspective is that if death leads to life, it must not really be death at all, at least not as death is traditionally understood. Whitman is attempting to redefine what it means to die and destabilize the dichotomy we understand between life and death.

Further attempts to define life and death occur in other sections of the poem and serve to subvert traditional comprehension of the phenomena. Section 49 specifically addresses Life, Death, and Corpse:

> And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try to alarm me.
> [...]
> And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does not offend me,
> I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,
> I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons.
>
> And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
> (No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.) (49.1;6-10)

Not only does Whitman rethink associations with death by asserting that he does not find death alarming despite death being a fear many people have, but he also rethinks life as being the remains of death. Whitman chooses to portray death as something that leads to life instead of something that follows life. His claim that he has died ten thousand times implies

also that life and death are not mutually exclusive, that they are not bodily states that exist in isolation of one another, but that they are in actuality embodied processes that occur in association, and at times simultaneously, with one another. Of course, this notion that he has died before exists alongside his statement, "I know I am deathless" positing yet another contradiction as he so frequently does in this text (20.18). In this particular case, the contradiction serves to further destabilize our understanding of death by implying that one can die numerous times while still being deathless. By repositioning death in this way, Whitman is presenting both an epistemological—how do we understand death—and an ontological one—what is death. Throughout *Paradise Lost,* Milton depicts Adam and Eve grappling with the same questions; while in many ways this similarity is indicative of Whitman and other transcendentalists picking up the threads of those questions where Milton left off, using this Whitmanian framework to look backwards into *Paradise Lost* shows that Milton was dealing with similar concerns of the composition of material bodies and how they experience death in a transcendental way.

While Whitman states that death is not alarming to him, it is the fear and promise of death that gives God's prohibition its power over Adam and Eve. In Book 4 life and death are juxtaposed through their embodiments as the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, but already there is an open admission from Adam that he does not know what death is:

> So neer grows Death to Life, what ere Death is,
> Som dreadful thing no doubt; for well thou knowst
> God hath pronounc't it death to taste that Tree,
> The only sign of our obedience left
> Among so many signes of power and rule (4.425-9)

Here Adam ponders the proximity of life and death, but only understands that death must be "some dreadful thing" because God has used the threat of death to prompt obedience from

him. In contrast to Whitman's ability to speak about death as it is something he believes he has experienced thousands of times, death does not yet exist in Eden and will not until the fall, thus Adam and Eve are unable to truly conceptualize it. In both cases, Whitman and Milton are offering definitions of death that subvert the expectations for death in favor of highlighting their bodily experiences or lack thereof. Their fear of death is revisited several times, but it is evident that the way they attempt to make sense of this potential punishment is in flux due to its unfamiliarity. These lines also develop a relationship between obedience and life, and disobedience and death which becomes useful in understanding how the introduction of death to Eden alters the Edenic way of life as I will explore further in my next section.

Although Adam and Eve do recognize the danger in their potential disobedience, it is not always death that they are afraid of because they are at times unable to fear what they do not know. Eve highlights this when she proposes that Adam is not afraid of dying because they are "not capable of death or paine" (9.283). She says that Adam must instead be afraid of Satan's deception and of her own faith being shaken, but not of the actual punishment for the fall. Throughout the rest of Books 9 and 10, death is a consistent focus as Adam and Eve begin to face the reality of their transgression and wonder what will happen to them now that they have eaten the fruit for which they are told they will surely die. In her temptation, Eve questions death as an invention for only her and Adam, meaning that she does not understand mortality as a constant between all living beings. They then realize they have not literally died at the moment of consumption, which leaves them to question what it even is to die. Adam, for instance, begins to address the existence of both a body and a soul and questions how they each may die. He questions whether he should "die a living death," which suggests

that he has started to consider the soul as eternal while his corporeal body would die (10.288). Later, however, he still thinks all of him may die, both body and spirit. Even when faced with their own mortality, Adam and Eve cannot fully comprehend it.

There are other times where the poem discusses death, or at least the blurred death/life dichotomy, separately from the prohibition and punishment. One such moment is in Book 8 when Adam's first day is retold. Adam explains that after first waking up and exploring the garden a bit, he sits down and falls asleep. He does not know at the time, however, that what he is experiencing is just a temporary sleep:

> there gentle sleep
> First found me, and with soft oppression seis'd
> My droused sense, untroubl'd, though I thought
> I then was passing to my former state
> Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve (8.287-91)

While Adam does not necessarily think he is dying here, he does think that he is returning to the state he was in before he was alive. The very notion that there is a state that Adam may be experiencing that is not living but also not death reinforces the destruction of a strict binary between life and death. However, it is possible that Adam does not state that he thought he was dying simply because his prelapsarian knowledge still does not fully understand death; to become insensible and dissolve seems to suggest that Adam would be losing consciousness and physically decomposing and therefore experiencing a sort of death to both his mind and body. Just as Whitman finds it "idle" for death to be alarming, though, Adam says that he was untroubled by this experience. This is likely because what Whitman understands to be death and what Adam is encountering here is not the mortal finitude that most people perceive death to be. Instead, death is a somewhat mysterious process that gives way to processes of life, such as the dream that interrupts Adam's sleep. A dream already is a

state that is somewhere between alive, awake and fully cognizant, and dead, unconscious and inactive. If Adam's suspicion that he may be dissolving and becoming unalive can be likened to death, then he explains that this pseudo-death was interjected by the dream that he says moved him to believe he "had being / and livd" (8.294-5). Although Adam may not have fully known what the phenomena of life and death are at the time of this occurrence, he is encountering life processes and cycles that reaffirm the belief that life and death are not a binary opposition.

Further connections can be made between Adam's sleep and transcendentalist conceptions of death by examining the idea of dissolution. Whitman writes about dissolution as well stating, "My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite, / I laugh at what you call dissolution, / And I know the amplitude of time" (20.31-3). These lines conclude Section 20 in which he questions what it means to be a man. He considers both his body, with questions such as, "How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?" as well as his spirit (20.2). In doing so, he is creating a paradox between permanence and impermanence as shown through his imagery of being "tenon'd and mortis'd" and laughing at dissolution. There is a stark contrast between the strength and durability of stone and the temporiness associated with dissolving. When Whitman says, "I know I am solid and sound," it can seem as though his laughter aimed at dissolution is based on an assumption that he will not experience dissolution because he is solid and attached to granite (20.15). In reality, we already know that Whitman is aware of his body's certainty to break down and dissolve into the Earth. Hence, it is more likely that his laughter is prompted not because he thinks he will evade dissolution but because he knows he will not, and he knows that in spite of inevitable dissolution his life will continue on as it has with every death he has experienced so far. In this way, it is possible for

him to be both deathless and dying, and this contradictory existence is one that is shared by Adam and Eve and helps to explain how they experience death in eating the fruit and yet continue to live.

Characterizing the Fall

My previous chapter examined the fall of humanity as a reflection of Eve's desire for transcendentalist education and a representation of the connection between humanity and divinity that prefigures transcendentalist ideals. This chapter continues to develop the proto-transcendentalist implications of the fall, but rather than focusing primarily on education, I will focus on the destabilization of life and death that I have outlined above. My goal is not to deny the tragic nature of the event, but rather to flesh out the nuance of how the tragedy affords prosperity and new life even in light of it being a sort of death. I investigate how the fall constitutes a death that correlates to the above deconstructed notion of what death is and how Milton shows these seemingly contradicting processes of life and death coexisting with the Edenic society and system.

Book 4 first shows Adam and Eve grappling with their prohibition, which presents a dichotomy between death and obedience. In his acknowledgement that "God hath pronounc't it death to taste that Tree," Adam is identifying the link between the fall and death, but he also continues saying that the Tree of Knowledge is "The only sign of our obedience left / Among so many signes of power and rule" (4.427-9). Adam is not just suggesting that disobedience is death, though this is implied in this passage, he is instead regarding the tree as a symbol of power structures in Eden. While Adam and Eve have been granted dominion over the other creatures found in the garden, the tree is the reminder that they are still subordinate to God and are navigating systems that he has put in place for them. Satan

identifies this as well when he describes the Tree as, "The proof of thir obedience" (4.520). He proposes that the prohibition and the tree that represents it are "invented with designe / To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt" (4.524-5). Although Satan's perspective is that these systems were invented in an act of tyranny for God to keep his subjects beneath him, a contrast to the celebratory tone Adam has when he mentions the symbol of their obedience, his statement helps to reveal how the Edenic society is functioning and how obedience maintains that society. Disobedience, then, is the destruction of the harmony in Eden on the basis of the disruption of the apparatus God has crafted.

Disobedience is interrogated at length in Book 5 when God announces the Son as his right hand. He reasserts the necessity of obedience and the repercussions of disobedience:

> him who disobeyes
> Mee disobeyes, breaks union, and that day
> Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
> Into utter darkness, deep ingulft, his place
> Ordaind without redemption, without end. (5.611-5)

God clarifies the governing and social system in Eden by demanding obedience to himself as well as to the Son. Moreover, he clarifies the punishment for the fall of man. What began as the pronouncement of death is now amended to transgressors being cast out and falling, and perhaps most notably being denied redemption. As readers, we know that humanity is still offered redemption, which suggests that the fall will fundamentally alter the governance that God is here imposing. Kevis Goodman makes a similar observation that "the immediate cause of man's disobedience is a dispute over working conditions [...]There has been work in Eden all along, but what is new here is the ethic of productivity, the intrusion of a "performance principle" (427). Goodman calls attention to the same principle that I do, that the fall changes the way Eden's society functions, but he focuses on the larger structures of

labor in *Paradise Lost,* whereas this chapter is more closely focused on how the fall enacts these kinds of changes through the destruction of established conditions in Eden. In being a disturbance to God's Edenic society, the fall then becomes a death to that system.

In moving forward to the event of the fall in Book 9, it is clear that the fall is not just a disruption to Eden in terms of governance or social system, but also an act that is destructive to the ecology of the garden. As I previously outlined, much attention has been paid to the fact that "Earth felt the wound" by scholars like DuRocher and what this means for the personified being of nature. Based on my earlier readings of death and deconstructing the life/death binary, I posit that wounding in the epic represents a state in between life and death. If life and death are coinciding processes rather than distinct states that exist in isolation, as discussed above, these processes then overlap with the occurrence of a wound. This is seen in nature's response to the fall, that it "gave signs of woe, / That all was lost" (9.783-4). While there is no finite death presented here, the presence of loss evokes the tragedy of death. This destabilization of nature and depiction of loss echoes the destabilization of God's governance; all aspects of life in Eden are altered by the fall. Using this scaffolding of how the fall causes a disruption and even destruction of the Edenic way of life allows the fall itself to be read as a death, but specifically the deconstructed death outlined above in which life still occurs within, or precisely because of, death.

This contradictory death can be understood in a material sense when examining the first instance of a more finite representation of mortality in the garden. When Eve returns to Adam after eating the fruit, Adam has been making a garland of flowers which, "From his slack hand the Garland wreath'd for Eve / Down drop'd, and all the faded Roses shed" (9.892-3). The notion of fatality, as in Eve's "fatal Trespass," takes on both the meaning of

relating to death or mortality as well as being associated with fate (9.889). We know that Eve was prophesied to eat the forbidden fruit, but what is still unclear is how that fatality is actually functioning given the fact that Eve was told that the punishment for this transgression would be death, and yet she lives through it. If we look a few lines earlier to Eve's consumption of the fruit where "Greedily she ingorg'd without restraint, / And knew not eating Death," we can consider the concept of incorporation and the way that death, here manifested in the fruit, is being integrated into her body through digestion. It becomes apparent that eating the fruit is not the direct cause of death, but rather the act that introduces mortality to the garden. Hence, when the faded roses experience death, the larger system of nature in Eden still lives around them because the process of death has been introduced within the process of life.

In this way the wound shows that Eden and its inhabitants, human and otherwise, are injured by the act of the fall. The impacts of this injury on the systemic functions of Eden's ecology are indicative of a complex sort of death that does not end life, but instead greatly alters it. Adam's question I discussed earlier "who knows / But I shall die a living Death?" actually becomes an accurate way to understand how death is working in Eden (10.787-8). Rather than thinking about the eternal soul and the relationship between the mind and body, Adam's question can summarize the effects of the fall on Eden as a consolidated body whose constituents include, among others, the human, animal, and plant beings that occupy it. In a material and embodied sense, life continues well after the fall, but now that mortality has been set in motion, those individual constituents can also begin experiencing the process of death even when that process does not necessarily lead to a precise and finite death as is the case in the transcendental life cycles investigated in my first section. While I find Davies's

proposal of the fall as a birth compelling, I argue that this analysis of death allows for the fall to be paradoxically a death and the production of new life.

Adam and Eve's Reincorporation

Categorizing the fall of humanity as a death in spite of the fact that Adam and Eve continue living after consuming the fruit illuminates the way Milton shows human bodies experiencing death, life in death, and life after death. By bridging together analysis of the narrative structure of *Paradise Lost* and analysis of the death of material bodies, I argue that Adam and Eve are being reincorporated into Milton's universe following their death that the fall signals in a way that anticipates the transcendentalist approach to being united with the world through the decomposition of the body back into the natural world.

One of the earliest passages after the fall that suggest a sort of reincorporation is Eve's speech in which she decides to have Adam eat the fruit as well. Eve questions, "what if God have seen / And Death ensue? then I shall be no more, / And Adam wedded to another Eve" (9.827-8). Her ponderance is not simply that Adam may have a new wife, it is specifically that he may have a new Eve, suggesting a cyclicality in their lives that as Adam and Eve die they will only be replaced by other iterations of themselves. This takes on more of a material context, though, when Adam also wonders, "Should God create another Eve, and I / Another Rib afford" (9.911-2). They are expecting that Eve's death would lead to the creation of a new Eve, but in Adam's mind this would be an exact repeat of the process by which the first Eve was created. This process is one that relies on material embodiment as Adam expects his body to contain the constituent parts to continue recreating new life. Rather than presenting a soul that is reincarnated, Milton's depiction of the life cycle here is

more accurately labeled as reincorporation because of the way that it privileges the experience of the body in life and death.

Book 10 shows Adam grappling with death and how it will affect him and his future children in a way that shows the ceaselessness of death through time. Although death has been mentioned extensively, Adam is still trying to make sense of this phenomenon when he asks, "But say / That Death be not one stroak, as I suppos'd" (10.808-9). His realization is that death is not just a finite single occurrence, which is appropriate to Milton's reframing of death that shows it as a process, but it also introduces the framework for how death operates in humanity beyond just Adam and Eve. He continues with this speech saying of death, "which I feel begun / Both in me, and without me, and so last / To perpetuitie" (10.811-3). Thus, Adam has now acknowledged that death has been put into motion, and that this process is ongoing "to perpetuity" through all of humankind. This furthers the understanding of reincorporation that Adam and Eve have when they wonder about "another Eve" and now suggests that life and death cycles operate in various iterations of Adam and Eve but also in all human embodiments they produce.

There is also material implication for the human body in this discussion of perpetuity. Adam laments his fear of his incoming death with the following passage:

> Comes thundring back with dreadful revolution
> On my defensless head; both Death and I
> Am found Eternal, and incorporate both,
> Nor I on my part single, in mee all
> Posteritie stands curst (10.814-8)

Adam's use of revolution here is notably another term that works in multiple ways. First, revolution suggests a stark change in a system such as the societal change in Eden that the fall ignites. While God's authority is maintained, and therefore the fall does not constitute a

revolution in the sense of an overthrown government, it does prompt a change in God's regime and leadership as shown in the variations between how the punishment for disobedience is articulated as well as in Adam and Eve's ultimate removal from Eden. Furthermore, the fall enacts a change in the operation of bodily systems, another type of revolution. In this passage Adam is identifying that systemic shift in the garden. Stephen Fallon explores the embodiment of death in the allegory of Sin and Death from Book 2. He writes, "The character Sin is the allegorical embodiment of Satan's turning from God; Death embodies the result of that turning, impairment of the reason and acquired physical grossness" (Fallon 343). If Satan's fall from grace had material consequences in the form of Death embodied, then it makes sense that Adam and Eve's human fall has similar consequences for the human body. In both cases, the fall has bodily implications, but for Adam and Eve these implications are specifically manifested in the future of human bodies through the introduction of mortality explored in my last section.

The second meaning of revolution is that it suggests revolving as in circularity. This initially refers to the way that this fear is circling through Adam's mind. The association between death and circularity, however, also returns the reader to the idea of death as an ongoing process. Adam is showing that he is already experiencing death and that this experience is going to be passed on through all of human life. The fact that this revolution is occurring on Adam's "defenseless head" centers the human body in this process; death is something that happens to the head as well as something that is slowly being understood in the head. As Adam's speech continues, the relationship between the perpetuity of death and the human body is further revealed. Adam uses the language of incorporation to show that death is now a part of his body. The joining of "Death and I" is "Eternal" in that although

death is now at play in the human body, it relies on life to extend its cycle. It is only through the multiplication of human life that death can be an eternal process once it has been integrated into Adam's body. This imagery of the body being made eternal even after death reflects the way that Milton is anticipating the perpetuity of the material body through incorporation that Whitman explores in his poetry.

As Adam and Eve are approaching their final moments in Eden, they have now fallen and death has been introduced to their bodies; the closing books of *Paradise Lost* not only show death as a process but also set the stage for Adam and Eve's reincorporation into the world. The penultimate book of the epic recounts human history as Michael shows Adam the many instances of death that will occur in the world. Milton's choice to represent these biblical stories of death as a sequence throughout Book 11 provides the reader with the image of Adam learning the fuller implications for death as an ongoing process. Meanwhile, the ultimate book of the epic shows that the narrative structure of *Paradise Lost* is not just a regenerative pattern in terms of the spiritual salvation of humanity, but also as the physical, bodily manifestation of that pattern.

Prior to Adam and Eve's exit, Milton first suggests that their story is coming to an end but quickly turns to terminology of perpetuation and continuity. He describes this moment in Michael's guidance of Adam and Eve as follows:

> As one who in his journey bates at Noone,
> Though bent on speed, so heer the Archangel paus'd
> Betwixt the world destroy'd and world restor'd,
> If Adam aught perhaps might interpose;
> Then with transition sweet new Speech resumes. (12.1-5)

This sentiment of stopping toward the end of one's journey is later echoed in Whitman's "Song of Myself." Milton makes it explicit, however, that this is not a full stop in their

journey, it is just a brief rest. Milton's placement of this rest highlights the experience of being in between; Adam and Eve are now in between life and death, Michael is in between the "world destroyed and world restored," and even this line is located in the center of the book's opening 5 lines. Although Milton provides this moment of pause, in Line 5 he concludes this pause and instead privileges transition and resumption. This patterning of pause and resumption is reminiscent of the patterning of degeneration and regeneration that Green traces when she identifies Milton's propulsion of his narrative into the future of humanity (655). My emphasis here, however, is on the evocation of bodily movement rather than the more abstract concept of redemption Green's work suggests. In centering the bodily experience of moving through space, Milton reminds his reader that Adam and Eve's experiences are functions of their embodiment, and that this embodiment is pivotal to their ability to seek redemption as they are cast out of Eden. By opening the last book this way, Milton is setting up that pattern of coming to a conclusion and then looking forward to progression.

This pattern of contrasting conclusion with progression is extended onto Adam and Eve's journey in the final lines of the poem. As Adam and Eve are approaching their exit, Milton writes:

> The World was all before them, where to choose
> Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
> They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,
> Through Eden took thir solitarie way. (12.646-9)

When reading their fall and subsequent removal from Eden as a death, we see that Adam and Eve seem to be paradoxically moving forward to a new life. Milton provides this reading by showing that even though their life in Eden is now behind them, the world is before them. The epic does end but the language used does not suggest finitude; just as with the life cycles

and the occurrence of death examined in earlier passages, the wandering steps that Adam and Eve take on their way out suggest perpetuity. Milton will have always left his reader with Adam and Eve as they take these steps. The pause that opens Book 12 is effectively replaced by the motion of the closing.

In this way, Adam and Eve's story ends with their incorporation back into the world. They have died, or are perhaps in the process of dying, but this death is one that provides them with the opportunity for new life. The focus on their steps as well as their joined hands emphasizes the centrality of the body to their progress; it is a function of their material being that allows them to access this new life. While Milton does not show us the decomposition of their bodies beyond the reference to dissolution, the connections between the life processes he develops through Adam and Eve and the life processes Whitman discusses become evident when analyzing how Milton depicts death. The tragedy of the fall and its alignment with death and the disturbance and destruction of Milton's Edenic society cannot be overlooked, but by focusing on the aftermath of the fall and the positive implications it will one day hold for humanity we can see that the fall also affords new life. The proto-transcendentalist conventions of Milton's representations of life and death are revealed when centering the human body and the way that life and death are materialized in *Paradise Lost.*

CONCLUSION

While transcendentalist writers referenced Milton and made apparent the ideals they felt he represented, little attention has been paid within Milton studies to what examining seeds of transcendentalism can offer readings of *Paradise Lost*. This thesis aims to utilize Milton's proto-transcendentalism to expand the current understanding of how matter operates in his work as well as to rethink how knowledge and the fall impact the experience of being human. Milton's Eden and the humans that occupy it are reflecting unity established by their shared divine presence. This Edenic system is altered and even destroyed by the fall, but this destruction coexists with the transcendentalist implications for gaining divine knowledge and new life.

By first outlining the experience of the reader as they are led through Eden in Book 4 alongside Adam and Eve, I have shown that, in spite of their postlapsarian perspective, readers are invited to occupy the prelapsarian world that Milton creates. Additionally, both Adam and Eve and the reader are tasked with navigating a landscape by their creator—the Edenic landscape that God creates and the Edenic text-scape that Milton creates. This Edenic environment that the various representations of humanity are interacting with is also occupied by angelic and divine beings. In providing this strain of unity between the reader and Adam and Eve, as well as the angels and nature in the form of the environment, Milton is presenting a harmonious universe that reflects transcendentalist ideals of nature and divinity.

Moving forward toward the moment of the fall, Eve's attempts at knowledge acquisition represent another transcendentalist ideal in the form of education through engagement with nature. Reading Eve's transgression as an attempt to physically incorporate the knowledge the forbidden fruit possesses into her own body highlights the relationship

between Eve and nature. The fall also acts as a moment where Eve attempts to ascend her place in the social hierarchy through both the gaining of divine knowledge and the communion with nature that is shown to be more spirituous than Eve is. Although the fall is still a transgression, it is the act which sets into motion the events that lead to the salvation of humanity through the crucifixion, and it is technically a successful attempt to learn from nature. Thus, the fall is in some ways a transcendentalist act just as it is a fall from grace.

The transcendentalist nature of the fall is further emphasized when considering questions about what death is and how death operates. Although the fall is aligned with death and is the act that introduces mortality to humanity, Milton's portrayal of death is an unstable process that lacks a clear and distinct boundary from life. Because life and death are both in progress after the fall, Adam and Eve are able to continue to live even while, or perhaps because, they are dying. Their death of the fall is manifested in their removal from Eden, but their ability to walk out into the world with new prospects ahead of them reflects their bodily reincorporation. These questions regarding incorporation and reincorporation into nature shed new light on the notion of "human dominion over nature" and how that principle is deconstructed when Adam and Eve are seen as being composed of and constituent of nature. Further emphasizing the language of incorporation and reincorporation within Milton studies helps to show the way that matter is being distributed and exchanged among different entities both in instances of digestion as has been frequently discussed and in other instances of bodily processes shown in *Paradise Lost.*

By identifying the literary conventions and philosophical ideals that are shared by *Paradise Lost* and transcendentalist texts, the similarities in between these texts arise while the moments where they subvert expectations and diverge from those conventions become

more apparent. Milton's adherence to and divergence from those literary traditions provide new insight into his universe and the way bodies operate within it. While the fall is no less a tragedy when read as a transcendentalist act, it is a tragedy that can paradoxically exist as a fortunate moment that allows humanity to gain knowledge and salvation. Thus, Milton's attempts to justify the ways of God to man and his representation of *felix culpa* philosophy becomes increasingly evident when analyzing the proto-transcendentalist elements of *Paradise Lost*.

Although ecocritics have been increasingly concerned with what *Paradise Lost* has to offer in understanding how people in the early modern era conceived of the environment and their own relationship to it, there is still much to be said about how Milton crafts these human/nature relationships. My work here offers yet another avenue into understanding the universe of *Paradise Lost*. Rethinking Milton's representation of Eden as a transcendentalist space, or at least as a space that lays the groundwork for what would become transcendentalist notions of the environment, suggests that Milton was more concerned with how divinity exists on Earth than is perhaps initially evident. I have shown that Milton's portrayal of paradise brings together the earthly and heavenly realms, and this portrayal reflects a belief that God exists within the mortal realm and can be accessed by humanity by embracing their embodied relation to nature or the world that surrounds them.

This new insight into how Milton understands the world as depicted through Eden also reflects the hierarchies that Miltonists are frequently concerned with. By emphasizing the presence of divinity in all beings as well as the materiality of knowledge, I propose that these hierarchies are less static than they at times appear and that Eve in particular strives to use her time in nature to alter the systems that sustain these hierarchies. This project opens up

several new paths to take within *Paradise Lost* studies and shows new ways to build upon prominent scholarship that has been long standing in the field. In particular, examining movement through Eden and how the reader participates in that motion provides new additions to Stanley Fish's work on the reader of *Paradise Lost.* This analysis shows ways in which the reader is not just a participant in the fall, but also an occupant of Eden and how this is necessary to Eden's survival. In examining the harmonious Eden as a transcendentalist representation of nature that is at one with its human occupants due to that divine presence, we see that Milton is engaging with questions of an ontological understanding of unity that is not purely material, but relies on the materialization of divinity.

Rather than simply retroject transcendentalism onto *Paradise Lost*, I have intended to highlight the ways in which the philosophies and ideas that eventually became transcendentalism were already being explored by prominent thinkers prior to the American Romantic era. In association with the Kantian philosophy that much of transcendentalism is inspired by, this exercise helps to trace the literary movements that contributed to the writings that the American Romantic era produced. In addition to crediting Milton as a figure of self-reliance for his stances on government and his practicing of faith, as Emerson does in "Self-Reliance," it becomes even more apparent how Milton's theological positioning and representation of Christianity contributed to the way that transcendentalists understand the universe. While scholars like Leah Marcus have worked to outline how seventeenth century vitalism leads to modern conceptions of ecocriticism, this timeline becomes more complete when transcendentalist conceptions of a divine and unified nature become another checkpoint. Illuminating the conversations occurring between these texts helps to more accurately track the lineage of pastoral poetry as it developed into nature writing.

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Vita

Brianna Mitchell was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina to Bryan and Elizabeth Mitchell. She graduated Cape Fear High School in June 2017. The following autumn, she began studying English Literary Studies at Appalachian State University and was awarded the Bachelor of the Arts degree in May 2021. From June 2020 through May 2021 she began graduate studies in pursuit of the Master of Arts degree while earning her undergraduate degree. In July 2021 she transitioned to studying at the M.A. level full time.