

# Interview with Sarah E. Page

BY BOYD PETERSEN



## Talk about the process of writing “Coring the Apple.” What was your inspiration?

My inspiration for the poem came, in large part, from Robert Frost’s poem, “Never Again Would Bird’s Song Be the Same.” Frost’s poem startled me with its description of Eve as a being both lyrical and softly eloquent, and it inspired me to explore a new facet of Eve in my own poem.

## Describe the writing process. How many revisions did you make?

The creation of the poem was hardly instantaneous; rather, it was a gradual process that took several days of shuffling and scratching out words until I felt—or at least I hoped—that there was a sense of wholeness and coherency to the piece.

## What drew you to the Adam and Eve narrative as a source for your poem?

Sir Thomas Browne stated, “In one graine of corne their lyeth dormant the virtuality of many other, and from thence sometimes proceed an hundred eares.” This idea of virtuality is what drew me to the Adam and Eve narrative.

In “Coring the Apple,” I was trying to get into Eve’s head, to see the apple through her eyes and explore what sublime and terrible vision drew her hand to pluck the fruit and become mortal. Too often the focus is on what happened after or as a result of the Fall. I was trying to imagine what hap-

pened right *before* the Fall, because in my opinion, the internal conflict Eve went through to reach a decision is equally as important as the consequences of her choice itself. Why? Because I believe Eve’s choice reveals us—humanity’s potential. What she saw in the apple had worth, and we should never forget that.

Or, as Sheri Dew states, “Eve, for the joy of helping initiate the human family, endured the Fall. She loved us enough to help lead us” (“Are We Not All Mothers?” *Liahona*, Jan 2002, 112–14).

The other idea I try to examine in my poem is foretaste. Before Eve bit the apple, I wonder if she had a foretaste—an anticipation—not only of the pain and pleasure mortality would hold for her, but also of the promise mortality held for us that had *nothing* to do with her.

## Are there other scriptural narratives that have inspired your creative imagination?

Yes. I am especially drawn to narratives that involve divine sustenance, such as the Lord feeding the Israelites in the wilderness with bread raining from heaven. Manna means “What is it?” With the title of my poem, I am trying to ask the same question about the apple and what it meant to Eve, and consequently, what it should mean to us as individuals and to humanity as a whole.

## The first two lines are combined in an interesting way. What do these mean to you, and what was your motive in putting them together?

In D&C 29:39, we are told that we would not know the sweet if we never had the bitter. By combining these two lines, I was trying to ask Eve if she believed that the sweetness of her choice surpassed the bitter sting of the thistles and thorns—both physical and spiritual—that also arose as a consequence of the Fall. It could be argued that she answers my question in the poem in Moses 5:11—

*And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.*

My motive in putting the two verses of scripture together was to experiment with the scriptures as a source for “found poetry,” which takes words and phrases from other sources in order to create a new piece.

As Latter-day Saints, we are constantly told to “liken” the scriptures unto ourselves, and I believe that found poetry offers one such way to discover new poignancy and personal relevancy in each and every word. ■

\* This piece is discussed in Boyd Petersen’s essay on “Adam and Eve” on page 27.