

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Kristen A. Burkett for the degree of Master of Art in English presented on April 13, 2015

Title: “Justify[ing] the ways of God to man”: John Milton’s Use of Satan to Promote a Christian Message in *Paradise Lost*

Abstract approved:

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This paper focuses on Satan as a sympathetic figure in *Paradise Lost*, and it argues that readers’ sympathy for Satan drives them to pursue God’s grace in order to avoid falling into the same fate as Satan. It uses Reader Response theory to show how readers connect with Satan, and it discusses how readers will juxtapose Satan’s despair and how he deals with it to how Adam and Eve handle their despair. Furthermore, it discusses how Milton uses Ovidian references to characterize Satan’s fall as tragic and to depict the agony one experiences as a result of the fall and one’s separation from God. Through these characterizations, readers will be moved to seek God’s grace so that they too do not have to experience the agony of being permanently separated from God.

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“Justify[ing] the ways of God to man”: John Milton’s Use of Satan to Promote a Christian
Message in *Paradise Lost*

by
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A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Art

Presented April 13, 2015
Commencement June 2015

Master of Art thesis of Kristen A. Burkett presented on April 13, 2015.

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Kristen A. Burkett, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincere appreciation to my committee for their support and feedback throughout the entire process of working on this document, particularly my advisor, Rebecca Olson, for challenging me to think about my topic in new and interesting ways and for always providing me with encouraging advice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Purpose of Satan as a Sympathetic Figure	11
Chapter Two: Implicit Ovidian Allusions in Association with Milton's Satan	33
Bibliography	55

Introduction

John Milton's Satan from *Paradise Lost* has been a point of interest for literary critics from its first publication. Satan's alluring character appears as the hero of the epic, which has led many to question Milton's motives for making Satan so fascinating. The Romantics, being among some of the first literary critics to address Satan's status within *Paradise Lost*, typically read Satan as the hero of the poem. William Blake, for example, explains that Milton made Satan so appealing because Milton was "of the Devil's party without knowing it" (10), and Percy Bysshe Shelley argues that Milton gave "no superiority of moral virtue to his God over his Devil" (31). Later critics known as anti-Satanists tried to argue against the heroic reading of Satan, citing Satan's "selfishness or folly" (Carey 162). While critics have continually tried to decipher exactly why such a classically villainous figure would appear so heroic, the debate still holds strong. In these next two chapters, I suggest that Milton complicates Satan's character in such a way for two distinct purposes. In my first chapter, I argue that Satan appears as the hero of the epic because Milton wants Satan's anguish over his fall to be something readers can sympathize with and relate to. Satan eventually rejects God's grace and falls into despair, but readers¹ should, upon experiencing this choice with Satan, realize that they, unlike Satan, have the ability to accept God's grace; thus, they should accept grace instead of following Satan's path and delving into despair. In my second chapter, I argue that Milton uses implicit allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to depict Satan's fall as a tragedy. In this way, Milton emphasizes the reader's need for God because of the drastic effect the fall has on humanity.

¹ While it is difficult to determine exactly, it appears as though Milton aligned most closely with Reformed Theology, a theology influenced by Calvinist thinking and adopted by the Church of England. Original Sin was a belief held by Reformed Theologians, and it meant that all people are fallen and separated from God at birth as a result of Adam and Eve's first sin (Macleod 129). Therefore, Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* believing that all of his readers were fallen creatures and

The way I see these two chapters relating is that they both describe readers' sympathy toward Satan as something that connects readers to him but also eventually encourages readers to divert from his choices. In my first chapter, readers' connection with Satan causes them to vicariously experience the effects of the fall and contrast it to Milton's depiction of Paradise and life before humanity's fall. When they finally see how Adam and Eve handle their despair at being fallen in comparison to Satan, this comparison incites readers to ask for God's grace so that they do not end up like Satan, forever in agony over his fallen state. It is the reader's sympathy and connection with Satan that helps them draw the comparison between how he handles his fall and how Adam and Eve handle theirs. Without this comparison, readers may not see their fates tied to Satan's and therefore may not feel compelled to seek God's grace. In my second chapter, the reader's sympathy and connection with Satan is important so that they experience the fall with Satan and feel its tragedy. By experiencing the tragedy of the fall with Satan, readers are reminded of their need for God's grace to escape the tragedy of the fall. Therefore, readers are encouraged to seek God so that they do not end up tragically falling forever like Satan.

While I see that my two chapters are tied together through the reader's sympathetic relationship with Satan, I believe my first chapter sets up my argument for my second chapter. My first chapter uses Reader Response criticism to explain how readers experience the fall with Satan and then I argue that this experience makes readers feel connected to Satan. It is significant that this idea is understood for my second chapter because without feeling connected to Satan's fall, readers may not relate to the tragedy of it. If readers do not relate to the tragedy of the fall, then they may not come to the realization that in order to escape the tragedy of the fall they need to seek God's grace. Therefore, I see the first chapter as setting the tone for the argument in the

second chapter. It establishes the relationship that the reader has with Satan so that the second chapter can move on and explain how the tragedy of Satan's fall moves readers toward God and his grace. The second chapter, then, uses Ovidian allusion in order to depict Satan's fall as tragic. It uses familiar Classical references to characterize Satan's fall and its affect, thereby connecting Satan's circumstance to familiar classical tragedies. These allusions are significant in classifying Satan's fall as tragic so that readers will feel compelled to seek God's grace and avoid the tragedy of the fall for themselves.

A Brief Summary of Significant Critical Viewpoints of Satan's Role in *Paradise Lost*

As a way to situate myself within the larger critical argument, I offer a brief summary of some of the most significant literary criticism about Satan. I then explain how I see myself relating to and diverting from the critical conversations surrounding Satan and *Paradise Lost*. Following this summary, I will explain how I see myself building on and adding to this critical body of work.

As mentioned previously, the Romantics are often thought of as some of the first critics to investigate Satan's position in *Paradise Lost*. However, as John Carey explains, "the notion of Satan as the true hero of Milton's epic goes back to Dryden and was a commonplace of eighteenth-century literary opinion both in France and England" (161). The critics from the Romantic era, like Blake and Byron, saw Satan as a hero. William G. Riggs notes that Satan "impresses not just the romantic imagination and its offshoots; in seventeenth-century England the appeal of his heroics would have touched any admirer of Achilles or Hector or Aeneas" (304). The Romantics liked that Satan's role in *Paradise Lost* resembled the role of Classical

heroes. Therefore, early reception of Satan focused particularly on Satan's portrayal as the hero of the poem.

The fact that Satan can be seen as the hero of a Christian poem, one whose goal is to "justify the ways of God to man" (1.26), proves problematic for later critics. In 1942, C.S. Lewis, for example, in his "Preface to *Paradise Lost*", criticizes *Paradise Lost* for writing that "is curiously bad" (123). Lewis states that Milton's "presentation of God the Father has always been felt to be unsatisfactory" (124). While Lewis does not think God's character in *Paradise Lost* is particularly well-written, he does believe that Milton still championed his character and was truly trying to promote his sovereignty; Lewis believes that Milton just executed it poorly. As for Satan, Lewis sees him as a self-centered and foolish figure. He explains that Satan, "In the midst of a world of light and love, of song and feast and dance . . . could find nothing to think of more interesting than his own prestige" (92), and Lewis believes that Satan's pride and self-obsession cause all of his problems. Lewis continues, "all his torments come, in a sense, at his own bidding" (94). Therefore, we as readers do not truly admire Satan's character because he is truly loathsome; instead, if we find Satan interesting, Lewis argues, it is only because he was an easier character to write. He states that "to make a character worse than oneself it is only necessary to release imaginatively from control some of the bad passions which, in real life, are always straining at the leash" (96). Therefore, Lewis argues that Satan is so interesting because it is easier to write an interesting bad character than it is to write an interesting good character, and because no one can really write a good character that is much better as a person than who they are themselves.

Opposed to C.S. Lewis, William Empson, in his 1961 book *Milton's God*, argues that Satan is justified in his rebellion because God is evil and unjust. He quotes Sir Walter Raleigh to

expound upon his position, saying that “Satan’s ‘very situation as the fearless antagonist of Omnipotence makes him either a fool or a hero, and Milton is far indeed from permitting us to think him a fool’” (37). Empson further defends Satan by saying that Satan was merely trying to save Adam and Eve from a God who wanted them to remain ignorant (69). Satan is a hero because he tries to bring full knowledge to Adam and Eve by getting them to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Furthermore, Empson defends Satan’s despair saying that he despairs because he has lost his noble fight in heaven (31). Altogether, Empson might be one of Satan’s biggest supporters and one of God’s biggest critics.

Stanley Fish, on the other hand, in his 1967 book *Surprised by Sin*, produced one of the most influential readings of *Paradise Lost*. His ideas served to answer some of the most pressing questions in Milton studies at the time. Fish uses Reader Response theory to read *Paradise Lost*, and he states in the introduction to his work that “my thesis, simply, that the uniqueness of the poem’s theme – man’s first disobedience and the fruit thereof – results in the readers being simultaneously a participant in the action and a critic of his own performance” (lxxi). Simply put, Fish argues that the reader consistently gets tricked by Satan and therefore experiences the fall herself while reading the epic. He calls this “good temptation” and states that “the temptation is good because by means of it the secret corruption within is exposed, and consequently we are better able to resist the blandishments of less benevolent tempters . . . Milton compels this duty by fitting temptations to our inclinations and then confronting us immediately with the evidence of our fallibility” (41). In this way, when readers are faced with temptations from Satan during the poem, they can recognize the temptation and grow stronger morally by rejecting it. For Fish, that was Milton’s main purpose in writing the epic. Fish also recognizes, like Lewis, that Satan is a much more appealing figure in the poem than God. He explains that Satan’s appeal comes from

his rhetoric: “Rhetoric is the verbal equivalent of the fleshly lures that seek to enthrall us and divert our thoughts from Heaven” (61). On the other hand, he argues that God speaks in a more logical and less poetic way. Fish explains that logic may not be as appealing as rhetoric, but it is what is true and right and it will never lead anyone astray, therefore supporting the idea that God, while less appealing, is good. Overall, Fish believes that thinking logically can save anyone from falling into temptation, and that is what he argues Milton demonstrates in *Paradise Lost*.

While Fish’s work was seen as one of the most significant pieces of criticism on *Paradise Lost* in its time, a more recent critic has proved incredibly important as well. Neil Forsyth in his 2003 book *The Satanic Epic*, focuses particularly on the history of Satan, and argues that the Satan figure was primarily seen as an adversary or opponent. He states that readers would be most familiar with that representation of Satan, and so they would expect Satan to play the same role upon his introduction in *Paradise Lost*. However, Forsyth believes that Milton’s Satan would surprise readers because he does not totally reflect other historical representations of Satan. Instead, Forsyth, similar to other critics before him, argues that Milton’s Satan is meant to be read sympathetically. He states, “it is especially the reproachful, tortured, Baroque quality of [Satan’s] introspection . . . which makes so many readers find themselves in Satan” (60-1).

Different from other critics, however, Forsyth believes that Milton purposely made Satan sympathetic in order to discuss early modern theological controversies. Forsyth argues,

I think Milton did indeed invite his readers to adopt a Satanic reading of Scripture and of human experience: he lived in an age of controversy almost as vital as that in which the New Testament itself was written, and obviously knew for himself most of what the various sects and schools understood by certain disputed biblical passages. Satan was the vehicle for the articulation of such controversies. (73)

Forsyth goes on to say that these controversies are echoed through recurrent themes throughout the poem – themes of evil and grace – and that Milton particularly uses the battle between Satan

and God to discuss these controversial topics. Altogether, Forsyth thinks that we can see ourselves in Satan, and this reflection causes us to pay special attention to the theological issues Satan addresses. Thus, with readers' attention on these issues, it allows Milton to better explore the theological controversies of his time.

Other current significant readings of *Paradise Lost* discuss the loss that comes from the fall. Diana Treviño Benet, in her 2005 article "Adam's Evil Conscience and Satan's Surrogate Fall," reads the poem as one that explores loss and disobedience. She argues that Adam and Satan both experience similar situations – they both fall because of disobedience to God, and they both experience a sense of despair from being separated from him. She states that the poem examines Adam and Satan's "responsibility for moral choices they now lament" (12) and explores what it is like to be separated from God². Danielle St. Hilaire, on the other hand, in her 2012 book *Satan's Poetry: Fallenness and Poetic Tradition in Paradise Lost*, focuses more directly on the fall and how it affects humanity. She argues that *Paradise Lost* is not so much about creation or disobedience to God; instead, the poem tries to depict the origin of when human existence changed. She explains that it changed because of the fall and the fall occurred because of Satan. That is why, she argues, the epic begins with Satan and makes him appear as the hero of the work: "Milton's poem identifies with Satan, not because it believes that Satan was right to rebel, but because, the poem tells us, we are all of the devil's party, like it or not" (16). We have forever been changed because of the fall, and the fall started with Satan. Milton was just trying to depict that moment. Both of these critics recognize Satan's role in the poem as

² While Benet's argument is similar to the argument I make in chapter one, she does not address how the similarity of Adam and Satan's experiences affect Milton's readers. Instead, she is more concerned with the fact that Satan is aware that God's grace exists but still chooses to deny it. In this way, she argues that he deserves his punishment because even though he knows that God's grace could redeem him, he is still too prideful to accept it.

being significant, yet they, unlike some of the critics before them, do not try to tie Milton's religious beliefs to that representation. Instead, they both feel that it demonstrates a different aspect of our humanity, and they both believe that the focus on Satan is meant to accentuate the fall and why it happened.

How My Research Differs

In reviewing the critical landscape, I noticed that a lot of critics had talked about what exactly made Satan so appealing. Some have argued that he is appealing because of his resemblance to Classical Greek heroes; others have argued that his rhetoric makes him appealing. I, however, am concerned with *why* Milton chose to make Satan so appealing and what affect his appeal has on his readers. While Fish and Forsyth seem to respond to these questions, I see my argument offering another possibility for why.

I see myself aligning most with Fish's argument because Fish also uses Reader Response theory to assert that readers experience the fall with Satan. However, he argues that in experiencing the fall with Satan we learn to recognize Satan's temptations and therefore we grow stronger morally by learning to reject temptation when we remember that Satan is morally reprehensible. Our experience reading the poem works as a sort of temptation training. Readers consistently fall into temptation because of Satan's allure, but Milton makes sure to show readers that Satan is reprehensible and therefore readers will recognize how they have fallen for temptation and learn from the experience. I, on the other hand, argue that we experience the fall with Satan so that we can juxtapose our fallness with Adam and Eve's experience in Paradise. Then, upon seeing Adam and Eve fall and deal with their despair by asking for God's

forgiveness, readers will feel encouraged to seek God's grace in order to avoid wallowing in despair with Satan forever.

Forsyth also explains why Milton makes Satan so appealing. He argues that Milton is appealing so that readers can identify with him and relate to him in order to become aware of the theological issues Milton discusses in the text, like Calvinist predestination and political power. While I too argue that Satan is a sympathetic figure, one that readers relate to, I divert from Forsyth's explanation of why and argue that he is sympathetic so that readers will realize that they do not have to end up like him, forever falling further and further away from God. Forsyth argues that Satan's purpose is to make readers aware of theological debates about predestination, political power, love, and evil, but I see my argument as different because I argue that Satan's actions push readers toward a particular response while Forsyth's reading only tries to characterize particular religious controversies.

Similarly, my research diverts from other critics in its focus on Ovidian allusion as a way to characterize Satan as a tragic figure. As I will discuss in chapter two, many critics analyze Milton's Ovidian references and argue that these references serve to further characterize Satan as evil. Instead, I argue that these Ovidian references help characterize Satan's fall as tragic, therefore reinforcing the sympathetic reading I put forth in chapter one. I feel that the Ovidian allusions make it clear that Satan's fall was tragic and help warn readers to avoid some of the characteristics Satan exhibits.

Altogether, I see myself offering a new reading as to why Satan is so appealing. I started my investigation like the Romantics or Lewis, curious about what made Satan so interesting. However, as I investigated and read and reread *Paradise Lost*, I became much more interested in why Milton would make Satan so appealing, especially in a work that is supposed to promote

Christian values. As I researched, I was inspired by Fish and Forsyth, but I eventually came to my own conclusion that readers' sympathy for Satan is meant to encourage readers to avoid the same mistakes that he made. Furthermore, I saw Ovidian allusions as a way of characterizing Satan's fall as tragic, something others had yet to point out. In this way, readers' sympathy for Satan promotes a Christian message, the message that readers should seek God's grace and mercy in order to avoid staying in despair like Satan.

Chapter One: The Purpose of Satan as a Sympathetic Figure

Appealing rhetoric, emotional scenes, and a tragic story all help to make Satan an intriguing figure in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In fact, *Paradise Lost's* Satan has often been seen as the most interesting and alluring figure of the epic; however, many have questioned why Milton would choose to make Satan so appealing in a poem that is supposed to "justify the ways of God to man" (1.26). Why, for example, would Milton choose to focus on Satan and his fall, especially when he could have made readers identify with and feel sympathy for Adam and Eve instead? Critics have tried to explain Satan's appeal in various ways, stating, for instance, that he models classic epic heroes or that his narrated inner struggle makes him an alluring figure. However, while these explanations seem to identify *what* makes Satan alluring, they do not seem to answer the question of *why* he is so alluring. In this chapter, I would like to explore one possibility of why Satan appeals to readers and how it helps Milton to communicate his Christian message.

Since the Romantics, critics have tried to explain what about *Paradise Lost's* Satan makes him so fascinating. The Romantics began by identifying Satan as a heroic general who had fallen into despair because he had lost his great battle in Heaven against God. They saw Milton's poem as one that described Satan's tragic fall, which made him admirable and sympathetic to readers of the Romantic period. Later critics have noted the parallels between Satan and heroes of classic epics, especially Homer's *Illiad*³. Neil Forsyth, for example, argues that while Satan is certainly Milton's own creation, he is "based on passages in Homer" (18). These critics state that some readers may be drawn to Satan because of the heroic allusions that

³ Neil Forsyth write that the major similarity between Homer's *Illiad* and *Paradise Lost* is the confrontation between Satan and Gabriel at the end of Book Four because it mimics the dual between Ajax and Hector (19-20). He also cites the threatening vultures that appear in the *Illiad* and says that it relates to how Satan is depicted when he first arrives on earth.

Milton employs in his depiction of Satan. These readers may like Satan because they enjoy the classic epic hero and so they find those allusions entertaining. Other critics have argued that Satan's allure comes from his poetic language. In fact, they have argued that Satan is more interesting than God or Jesus because of his beautiful rhetoric. As Peter Berek explains, "The use of artful rhetoric to create the appearance rather than the reality of logical argument recurs again and again in the speeches of Satan and the other fallen angels" (240). In other words, while Satan has lines that are utterly beautiful, God has lines that are straightforward and less poetic. C.S. Lewis, for instance, claims that Milton should have "shown more poetical prudence" (124) when writing both Satan and God; Milton should have given God more poetic lines in order to make him more appealing to readers. Therefore, readers, even if only because of the poetic language in the poem, have found Satan more interesting than God. Additionally, Forsyth argues that readers find Satan "more impressive [and] more appealing," because they get to see his "inner self" (148). The fact that we get to see Satan's despair and inner struggles connects readers to him in a way that does not happen with God. For example, in his speech on Mount Niphates in book four, Satan surveys his woes, wonders if he could change, and finally accepts his despair. He opens the speech telling us that it is his "remembrance" (4.38) of his fall that brings about this self-examination. This conscious awareness of his inner struggles makes Satan attractive to his readers because they appreciate his vulnerability.

Similar to Forsyth's claim that Satan appeals to readers because of his emotional awareness, I argue that readers feel sympathetic toward Satan because of his fallen state, and it is this feeling of sympathy that attracts readers to his character. By sympathetic, I specifically mean "the quality or state of being affected by the condition of another with a feeling similar or corresponding to that of the other; the fact or capacity of entering into or sharing the feeling of

another or others” (“sympathy”). I believe that through readers’ sympathy for Satan, they relate to his fallenness because they too, according to Milton’s theology, are fallen. In particular, I believe that readers feel sympathetic toward Satan because they can relate to or understand his despair. In the early modern period, people often despaired as a common response to recognizing their sins; therefore, as I will explain more fully later, despair was a common emotion among early modern readers, so they could often relate to Satan because of his feelings of despair.

Readers’ ability to connect with Satan’s despair is important because, having never experienced a world in which they are not fallen creatures, readers see the horrifying effects of the fall from the perspective of one who had experienced life *before* the Fall. Satan is a more sympathetic and persuasive figure than Adam and Eve because he witnesses Adam and Eve’s life in Paradise after his fall, which serves to magnify the effects of his fall; Satan’s fall serves to depict for readers just how great a loss the fall was since they are able to directly compare a fallen creature’s life with life in Paradise. Furthermore, I will argue that since the first eight books of the poem occur before Adam and Eve’s fall, readers are meant to experience the tragedy of Satan’s fall and feel his loss first in order to then juxtapose his fall with that of Adam and Eve’s. Milton focuses on Satan and makes him sympathetic in order to compare how he handles his despair to how Adam and Eve manage their despair. While they both experience despair after their falls, Adam and Eve choose to repent and ask for God’s grace, while Satan allows his despair to overwhelm him and damn him to Hell. Thus, this comparison makes readers aware of the grace available to them and encourages them to repent and seek grace for themselves. While the popular Calvinist theology of the time does not believe that man has control of his salvation, because God ultimately only extends grace to his elect, Milton does not seem to align with Calvinist theology in *Paradise Lost*. In fact, Benjamin Myers argues, and I

agree, that Milton actually believed that grace was available to all, not just a particular chosen elect, and Myers argues that this viewpoint is demonstrated throughout the poem (87-88). Since I do not believe that Milton aligned with Calvinist ideas about predestination, I think that the fact that Milton may have believed that grace was available to all helps to justify my reading that *Paradise Lost* encourages readers to accept the grace available to them. Therefore, Satan's decision to not return to God for forgiveness encourages readers to respond differently when faced with their own fallenness.

To fully understand the significance of the despair depicted in *Paradise Lost*, one must understand how early modern readers would have conceived of despair. Despair in the early modern period was considered a terrible sin. Susan Snyder explains that despair appears as a significant theme often in Renaissance literature (18), and she states that "despair in its theological sense" signals a "loss of hope of salvation" (18). Those who found themselves despairing often experienced "constant anguish" and the inability to "eat, drink or sleep" (39). Snyder notes that those suffering from despair were "troubled by awful dreams and visions" and that they often end up committing "blasphemy and suicide" (39). What is especially interesting about despair during the early modern period is that the religious views of the time often led to feelings of despair. For example, the Protestant views of the period placed an "emphasis on man's complete unworthiness and helplessness [which] tended to reinforce the paradox of despair" (23). So, even though the religious tradition of the time believed despair was a sin, the emphasis on remorse for one's sins and the stress on the idea that one could not obtain salvation on their own often led to feelings of despair. Therefore, early modern readers especially would have identified with Satan's feelings of despair when faced with remorse for his sins. Furthermore, this connection could explain why Milton focuses so intently on Satan's despair

and depicts it in such great detail. He wanted readers to identify despair as a common reaction to their sins and perhaps relate it to their own lives.

Since this chapter focuses on the reader's response to Satan and particularly to the despair he feels as a result of his fall, I will give a brief summary of the Reader Response theory that I will use as a theoretical lens for this reading. Wolfgang Iser⁴ argues that "central to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient" (31). Like Iser, I believe that the interaction between the reader and the text in *Paradise Lost* is most important to analyzing the poem. Therefore, I must assume that the connections readers feel with Satan are integral to the message of the text, and I believe that it particularly explains why Milton chose to make Satan a sympathetic central character. In continuing the explanation of his theory, Iser writes that unlike any face-to-face interaction with another person, "The reader . . . can never learn from the text how accurate or inaccurate his views of it are" (32). Thus, Iser explains that the author must leave clues for how the reader should interpret the text, and he contends that these clues come from the "gaps" or "blanks" in the text: "Blanks indicate that the different segments and patterns of the text are to be connected even though the text itself does not say so" (34). Iser considers "blanks" or "gaps" to be places in the text that leave the reader with a question or do not offer explicit explanation of a matter. These blanks encourage the reader to interpret their meaning and interact with the text. For example, patterns that occur throughout the text may not be explained, and therefore the reader may wonder about their importance and will work to understand its meaning. Although *Paradise Lost* is not a novel, which is the focus of

⁴ While Iser presents his Reader Response theory as a way to read prose texts, I think his theory can still be applied to poetry, and therefore *Paradise Lost*, because, as he explains "a text can only come to life when it is read, and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader" (4). Here, he does not seem to limit the type of text, but states that a text can only come to life when examined through the reader's response to it.

Iser's theory, the characterization of Satan recalls Iser's account of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Iser states that in *Tom Jones*, various characters represent different norms that make up human nature and that the "contrasts and discrepancies within the perspective of the characters give rise to the missing links, which enable the hero and the norms to shed light upon one another" (38). Therefore, as Tom violates the norms exhibited by the minor characters, readers must decide why. Iser states that these gaps lead readers to two different interpretations:

Whenever the hero violates the norms – as he does most of the time – the resultant situation may be judged in one of two different ways: either the norm appears as a drastic reduction of human nature, in which case we view the theme from the standpoint of the hero, or the violation shows the imperfections of human nature, in which case it is the norm that conditions our view. (38)

Altogether, the contrast between the minor characters and Tom encourages readers to interpret human nature in a particular way.

Part of Iser's theory that is important to my analysis of *Paradise Lost* is the idea that the author will leave enough clues throughout the text to help point the reader to the meaning he is trying to convey. Take, for example, two major patterns in *Paradise Lost*: the fall and despair. While Milton does not directly connect Adam and Eve's fall with Satan's or the despair they all experience, the fact that they all experience despair after their fall creates a pattern, and this pattern, according to Iser, encourages the readers to compare their individual despairing experiences and formulate some meaning. I will argue that when the reader makes these connections, it encourages him or her to recognize that the acceptance of grace is the only thing that truly separates the fallen experiences of Satan and Adam and Eve; Satan does not repent, but Adam and Eve do. Upon this interpretation, another "blank" or "gap" arises: why might the difference between how Adam and Eve and Satan respond to their despair be significant? I will argue that this difference encourages readers to ask for God's grace and be thankful that it is

available to them. The interaction between the text and the reader encourages a response, and, in this case, I believe, it incites the reader to ask for God's grace.

Another important aspect of Reader Response theory for my project has to do with the reader's own experience that he or she brings to the text. Louise M. Rosenblatt argues that readers "participate in the story . . . identify with the characters . . . [and] share their conflicts and their feelings" (270). In other words, readers join in on the experiences of the characters and often feel the same emotions the characters feel. Furthermore, Rosenblatt states, "In order to shape the work, we draw on our reservoir of past experience with people and the world" (270). Readers will relate to characters and situations based on their own past experiences. Therefore, readers may identify with Satan because they can see themselves in him. He, unlike Adam and Eve for the first two-thirds of the poem, is fallen. Readers, fallen themselves, would identify with Satan's emotions and experiences more so than that of Adam and Eve's, since they do not fall until the end of Book Nine. Hence, readers could be reminded of the pain of their fallen nature by seeing Satan's reaction to his fall. This connection could make the readers distressed when they experience Satan reject grace, and thus make them want to respond differently when dealing with their own fallenness.

Before I delve into my reading of the text using Reader Response theory, I would like to address why I have chosen to use Reader Response theory as opposed to other, more popular critical theories. Even though many critics may argue that Reader Response theory is a bit outdated, since its popularity was primarily in the 1970s (Tyson 170), I have chosen to use it for two reasons. First, since my reading was inspired and influenced by Stanley Fish, I felt it was appropriate to continue with his methodology for reading *Paradise Lost*, even though I'm offering a new reading that diverges a bit from Fish's conclusions. Secondly, I felt that Reader

Response theory fit best with the argument I am making because its goals are to explain that “the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature and . . . that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text” (Tyson 170). Since Milton’s purpose, as he states in the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, is to “justify the ways of God to man” (1.26), I believe that analyzing the reader’s response to the text aligns with the purpose Milton sets out for the text. While a more current and popular theory like Affect Theory could perhaps address how Milton is able to justify the ways of God to his readers, I contend that Reader Response theory works best for my reading because I believe that the “gaps” in the text lead readers to particular conclusions as opposed to readers coming to those conclusions through an emotional response to their reading.

In order to establish a connection between Satan and his readers, readers are first introduced to the fall and are reminded of its implications in the very beginning of the text. “The Argument,” which is the prose piece at the beginning of the text, serves to signal to readers what Milton thought was most significant about the poem. Katharine Eisaman Maus and Barbara Lewalski explain in a footnote of *Paradise Lost* that the opening prose argument was something the printer asked Milton to include; it was not a part of Milton’s original manuscript. Maus and Lewalski explain that the printer wanted a brief summary of the poem as a way to help the reader follow along. Therefore, this portion of prose text is quite revealing about what Milton felt was most significant in *Paradise Lost*: “The Argument” lets readers know that the poem will discuss the cause and effect of the fall. “The Argument” begins as such: “This first book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject, man’s disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed: then touches the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent” (1945). Even though “The Argument” only mentions “man’s disobedience” as the subject of the

poem, one might easily extend this disobedience to include Satan's as well because the poem is very much concerned with his disobedience and fall, too. To further associate Satan with this theme, Milton connects Satan directly to the fall when he writes, "the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent" (1945). Not only does Milton say that Satan is the prime cause of Adam and Eve's fall, but by placing the word "fall" in such close proximity to Satan, he encourages the reader to equate the two. Also in this line, Milton directly focuses the reader's attention on Satan by clarifying that Satan, not the Serpent, caused Adam and Eve's fall; thus, Satan and the fall become directly connected, and the theme of the fall is reinforced and related to Satan. Satan and his fall become the primary focus of *Paradise Lost*.

Since Satan is related to the fall in the beginning of Book One, it is important to understand the characteristics of the fall and how it affects those who experience it. One important characteristic of the fall is that it separates one from God. Unlike the Biblical representation of this permanent disconnection, *Paradise Lost* particularly focuses on Satan's loss of connection with God as opposed to Adam and Eve's. From the Biblical perspective, in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve eat from the Tree of Knowledge and immediately recognize that they are naked. When God walks in the garden, Adam and Eve hide themselves, and upon the Lord calling for them, Adam says, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (*KJV*, Gen. 3:10⁵). From this verse, we see how Adam and Eve's relationship with God had immediately changed. They no longer feel free to meet with God or connect with him because of their shame. Then, to further demonstrate how their relationship is forever different, God banishes them from the garden, a place that used to signify the intimate

⁵ John Broadbent states that Milton "chiefly used" a 1612 printing of the Authorized Version of the Bible or the King James Bible from 1611, although he does note that Milton's third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, owned the Geneva Bible (145).

relationship they had together. While Milton does mention this separation from God with Adam and Eve, and does replicate much of what happens in Genesis, he decides to dramatize this separation through Satan. In Book One, Milton mentions Satan's separation from God and focuses on how this separation affects him. While readers see Satan in pain over this disconnection, they see Adam and Eve as blissfully happy in the garden. In this way, readers get a clear comparison between separation from God and connection with Him. Readers can juxtapose Satan's fallen state with that of Paradise and can better understand and relate to the anguish that comes from being separated from God.

As previously mentioned, Satan's separation from God is emphasized from the very beginning of the poem, and the poem opens with describing how this separation has affected Satan. The first book of the poem discusses Satan in Hell, immediately after he has fallen from Heaven. Readers only get a very brief description of what happened to cause Satan's fall, but what Milton emphasizes most is that Satan has been separated from God. While the beginning of Book One addresses "man's first disobedience" (1.1), it quickly moves on to describing Satan and his state, further encouraging readers to connect with him immediately. The narrator mentions the "fiery gulf" (1.52) to which Satan is confined, but he is sure to describe Satan's pain at being removed from God's presence: "For now the thought / Both of lost happiness and lasting pain / Torments him" (1.54-6). The enjambment of the last line forces readers to linger on the words "torments him," allowing them a moment to dwell on and feel that same pain. To accentuate Satan's separation from God, the narrator, a few lines later states, "Here their prison ordained . . . As far removed from God and light of Heav'n / As from the center thrice to th' utmost pole" (1.71-4). In these few lines, we see that Satan is locked away from God. Just as a prisoner is separated from the outside world, Satan and the other fallen angels, in their prison in

Hell, are separated from God. This separation is amplified with the simile that compares their distance from God with three times the distance of the center of the universe to the furthest pole. Also, the very fact that the poem begins with Satan's perspective sets the tone for the rest of the poem: a tone of loss and pain. This initial focus on Satan makes it apparent that readers should follow his story closely, and the depiction of his pain at the separation from God evokes sympathy from readers. This separation makes him very different from Adam and Eve, who enjoy access to God in Eden, thus making Satan more relatable to his fallen readers.

In order to accentuate Satan's disconnection from God, the narrator, in the beginning of Book Four, lets us know that Satan cannot escape Hell, regardless of his physical location: "For within him Hell / He brings, and round about him, nor from hell / One step no more than from himself can fly" (4.20-2). Because Hell is part of him and follows him everywhere he goes, his confinement to Hell signifies the intensity of his punishment. Just as he once was a part of God, now that part has been replaced with never ending pain and torment. Furthermore, Hell is not just a place where he is banished, but it surrounds him, it is "round about him," and, even worse, it is *in* him. Hell has become a part of him, replacing the part that God used to fill.

Satan's separation from God helps readers relate to him since he is the only fallen figure for most of the poem; yet, to further help readers relate to Satan and feel sympathetic toward him, Milton depicts Satan's pain over being falling in the beginning of Book Two. His pain, as a symptom of his despair, should make him relatable to readers who have felt despair as a result of recognizing their sinfulness. Here, Satan explains that no one should envy his position:

The happier state
 In Heav'n, which follows dignity, might draw
 Envy from each inferior; but who here
 Will envy whom the highest place exposes . . .
 and condemns to greatest share
 Of endless pain? (2.24-30)

Satan states that a promotion of rank, at least in Heaven, was desirable, yet it could provoke envy from others in lower positions or rank. However, Satan, now in Hell, has a higher position of rank, but says that this position should not be envied because it represents how much farther he fell and how much more pain he feels. In other words, he had further to fall, and because of his rank before and the leadership he took in instigating the rebellion, his punishment is more severe. He feels “the greatest share / of endless pain” (2.29-30). While readers may want to condemn him for causing all of this pain for himself, this portion of the text reminds us how deeply Satan felt the pain of his fall and tries to evoke sympathy from readers who, while fallen, have not felt the full effect of their loss.

Another moment in Book Two that also casts a sympathetic light on Satan and the other fallen angels occurs when Satan states their need of rescue: “While I abroad / Through all the coasts of dark destruction seek / Deliverance for us all” (2.463-5). Even though we may question whether or not Satan and the fallen angels deserve deliverance, this statement allows readers to understand and relate to how Satan feels in this moment. He sees the space that he and the other angels are in as restrictive, a place from which they need rescuing, a place of despair. “Deliverance” implies justice; therefore, he views their captivity as unjust. Again, while readers still may view Satan as being rightfully thrown into Hell, this depiction allows us a glimpse into Satan’s feelings about his fallen state and asks readers, in part, to be sympathetic to Satan’s captivity, for readers also may understand and relate to the need for rescuing, a need for grace. As Rosenblatt suggests, this shared feeling further connects the reader to Satan because the reader can relate to the feelings of injustice that Satan depicts in the text (270).

In order to further connect readers to Satan, Milton depicts Satan’s woe, an emotion readers may relate to as a characteristic of a postlapsarian world. Every time Satan is directly

faced with what he has lost, he speaks out in misery. Upon his first arrival to earth, he felt “grieved” (4.28), and he relates his wretchedness saying, “Under what torments inwardly I groan” (4.88) and that he is “only supreme / In misery” (4.91-2). At first sight of Earth, it seems that his loss is intensified, and he feels the pain of his loss more powerfully. A little later, after he first sees Adam and Eve, he exclaims, “O Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold” (4.358). By crying, “O Hell!” Satan reminds us that he is stuck in Hell despite the fact that he witnesses bliss on earth. While Satan does not directly make that relation, his language suggests the connection. This suggested connection could be seen as one of Iser’s gaps, a place where comparison is not stated but is encouraged. This gap encourages the comparison of Hell and Paradise, because Satan’s spiritual hell is juxtaposed to the Paradise he witnesses. Their comparison seems to emphasize Satan’s separation from God and highlight the fact that he is trapped in Hell and that even upon viewing bliss, he cannot participate in it. Also evident in this line, the word “grief” implies a deep loss, usually associated with death. Therefore, Satan’s loss of happiness is an eternal one; it is something he will never again experience. Satan expounds on this sentiment after watching Adam and Eve talk together. Satan bellows,

Sight hateful, sight tormenting! Thus these two
 Imparadised in one another’s arms
 The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
 Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust
 Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
 Among our other torments not the least. (4.505-510)

In this instance especially, Satan compares what he feels to emotions he sees in Paradise. Since he brings Hell everywhere with him, he can never feel love or joy again; while he is always violently thrust further into Hell, he can never experience bliss. In these moments, Satan is especially faced with his fall and reminded how he is still moving further and further away from the happiness and love he witnesses. It demonstrates for readers the extreme loss that occurs as a

result of the fall, a loss that they, born as fallen creatures, would not fully understand the consequences of until experiencing it through Satan. Satan continues to describe this feeling saying, “The more I see / Pleasures about me, so much more I feel / Torment within me” (9.119-21). Since his falling is continual, with every new pleasure he witnesses, he is further from it than the last pleasure he viewed, thus making the torturous feeling worse. Satan, faced with Adam and Eve’s utter happiness in Paradise, becomes even more aware of his incredible loss and feels his loss even more deeply. For this reason, readers cannot help but feel sympathy toward his pain. Having experienced Satan’s loss through reading the text, readers may even feel a tinge of envy and regret upon his description of Adam and Eve, making them long to experience Paradise, too.

In order to further emphasize Satan’s loss, Milton writes that Satan acknowledges how being on Earth has increased his pain because he is better reminded of what he has lost. He opens his speech on Mount Niphates with “O sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams / That bring to my remembrance from what state / I fell” (4.37-9). Not only does this imagery remind readers of the tragedy of Satan’s fall, but it also serves to remind Satan of what he used to have. This moment serves to represent the fall spatially, dramatizing the distance between how high Satan once was, to how low he now is. The sun, being high, reminds Satan of how far he fell from Heaven to Hell. Furthermore, while he addresses the physical sun, the word “sun” is a homophone with the word “Son.” Therefore, Satan’s addressing of the “sun” may imply a double meaning. It may remind readers of God’s Son, the reason for Satan’s rebellion. However, God’s Son also represents the high position Satan had and hoped to have; therefore, upon coming to earth, not only was Satan faced with Paradise, but he was reminded of his life before the fall and what caused him to fall.

While the depiction of Satan's woe may make readers feel sympathy for him, readers feel most connected to Satan when he explains first hand how he has experienced the fall. He reveals his raw emotions and anguish, and this glimpse into his conscience causes readers to feel connected to him because of his vulnerability. In these extremely personal moments, one may not revel in his pain or feel as though he deserves it. Instead, his personal reflections may cause readers to get pulled into his misery and feel compassion toward him. Readers see that upon examining his conscience and being driven by pain, Satan wishes things would have happened differently. He states,

O had his powerful destiny ordained
 Me some inferior angel, I had stood
 Then happy; no unbounded hope had raised
 Ambition. (4.58-61)

He thinks that had he been in an inferior position, maybe he would not have been tempted to rebel. As an "inferior angel" he would not have expected to be raised to the favored position of the Son of God; therefore, his "hope" would not have been crushed when God announced his Son's privileged position. An inferior angel would have had too far to climb in order to be raised to such a high position, and therefore would never expect such a promotion. It was the promotion of God's Son that made Satan envious because he felt that he had a right to that position, and that envy incited his rebellion. Therefore, had he been in a lower position, he believes he would have never felt jealous and would not have rebelled.

Something else that makes Satan more sympathetic to his readers is the apparent remorse for his actions, because one is much more likely to sympathize with someone who is sorry for their poor decisions than someone who feels no regret for them at all. In the speech on Mount Niphates he states,

Warring in Heav'n against Heav'n's matchless King:

Ah wherefore! he deserved no such return
 From me, whom he created what I was
 In that bright eminence, and with his good
 Upbraided none, nor was his service hard.
 What could be less than to afford him praise,
 The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks,
 How due! yet all his good proved ill in me. (4.41-8)

In this moment, Satan realizes how ungrateful he was for all he had been given. He states that God had “created” him, and even though God gave him life, all God’s “good proved ill in [him]”. God’s goodness – creating Satan – “proved ill” because Satan did not appreciate the life he had. Instead, Satan became greedy and wanted more power and more recognition. While all God wanted was “praise” and “service,” which Satan says was not too much to give to God in return for his life, Satan still took what he had for granted. This portion of his speech complicates Satan’s character because it shows that he realizes he should have valued his previous position. Looking back on the circumstance now, Satan calls God a “matchless King,” which shows the respect he now has for God. He states that he regrets how he treated God’s kindness: “Ah wherefore! he deserved no such return / From me, whom he created.” By saying that God did not deserve his response because he was Satan’s creator, Satan is emphasizing the intimate relationship they had, which further accentuates his betrayal and his later regret. It reveals that he realizes how selfishly he acted and that he should have acted differently. With this depiction, readers not only feel sympathetic toward Satan because he is in pain, but they also feel sympathetic because he has remorse for what he has done. His remorse almost makes his past faults disappear, and it may cause readers to hope that Satan can find redemption. Knowing that Satan has seen his foolishness makes him more forgivable.

Some may wonder why Satan does not repent since he feels regret; however, Satan makes it clear that he does not think he could truly repent. Upon admitting his regret, Satan

ponders his ability to repent: “But say I could repent and could obtain / By act of grace my former state” (4.93-4). He wishes he had the opportunity to go back to Heaven. He knows that he would need to receive grace from God and he wants to repent, but he concludes that he cannot because,

Never can true reconciliation grow
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep:
Which would but lead me to a worse relapse,
And heavier fall. (4.98-101)

He fears that he is stuck because he lacks the ability to forgive and move on from the “deadly hate” he feels over the Son of God and his position. Readers may feel sympathetic toward his position because he longs to be restored to his original state, but he lacks the faith in himself to move past his feelings of envy; he thinks instead, if he were restored, it would just lead to “a worse relapse / And heavier fall.” He does not doubt that God could restore him and he does not want to give up on himself, but he feels as though he has no other choice.

To further help readers connect to Satan because of his despair, the narrator mentions Satan’s despair often. Upon first falling to Hell, Satan experiences despair. Right before he addresses the crowd of fallen angels, the narrator tells us that Satan was “racked with deep despair” (1.126). Book Four has many references to Satan’s despair, which makes sense since it is when we see Satan examine his conscience and recognize the mistakes he has made. Beth Quitslund mentions that searching one’s conscience can lead to realizing the depths of one’s sins (93), and similarly, the narrator explains that Satan’s “conscience wakes despair” (4.23). This idea, that the conscience is a catalyst to despair, appears again after Satan’s speech on Mount Niphates. The narrator explains Satan’s appearance during his speech: “Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his face / Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy, and despair” (4.114-15). Therefore, while Satan examines his conscience, he experiences despair because he remembers

the sins he has committed. Also, Satan closes out his Mount Niphates speech by stating “So farewell hope” (4.108). After he has examined his conscience, instead of recognizing that he has sinned and needs God’s grace, he denies the hope that God can offer and settles into his despair, thus ridding him of any opportunity for hope. Snyder explains that “the paradoxical nature of despair” is that “awareness of sorrow for past sin, always the first step of fallen man on his way to salvation, may lead him into such self-loathing that he feels – and therefore *is* – beyond the reach of God’s mercy” (20). This explanation describes Satan’s situation perfectly. He believes he cannot change, that God’s forgiveness cannot change him, and therefore he is stuck in Hell.

Since Satan decides he cannot change and despairs, he refuses to free himself from his despair by accepting God’s grace. Early modern thinkers may have explained this decision by stating that those who are prideful often have a difficult time asking for forgiveness and thus find it difficult to move away from their despair. Snyder explains that people in the early modern period believed that “pride and despair [were] linked in the refusal to acknowledge insufficiency of self and ask for God’s help” (32). This understanding of despair directly correlates with what we see of Satan. His Fall is consistently linked with his pride and ambition, and as we saw in his speech on Mount Niphates, he does not believe he can change how he feels, and thus believes that if he were to return to God, it would only lead to “a worse relapse” (4.100) and “heavier fall” (4.101). He does not think of asking for God’s help nor does he try to accept God’s grace. Thus, he falls further into despair. As readers, having experienced the fall and Satan’s despair with him, we do not want him to be stuck in Hell when we know that grace is available. Therefore the fact that Satan does not choose grace emphasizes that there is a choice to be made, and seeing the outcomes of the choice, through Satan and Adam and Eve, readers will want to choose grace instead of despairing forever.

As I previously mentioned, his despair is incredibly important because it can be compared to the despair Adam and Eve felt after their fall; however, how they dealt with their despair and move forward after it seems to be a point Milton emphasizes. While Milton does not directly ask the readers to compare these two situations, parallels in the text leads readers to the comparison, and it signals the importance of the comparison between these two situations. While Satan wallows in his despair, forever confining himself to Hell, Adam and Eve also despair, but they respond differently. Popular opinions during the Renaissance held that while despair was a damnable sin, despair also *could* lead to a cleansing of the spirit and eventually bring one closer to God. Martin Luther, for example “found the experience of despair so necessary a part of holiness that he extended it to Christ himself” (Snyder 27). The idea behind this line of thinking is that people can despair because they recognize how great their sins are, but instead of sinking further into despair, they come to realize that God is their only way to salvation and accept his grace. Therefore, they become closer to God through this experience because they become aware of the extent of his grace and love. It is those who despair and do not find God’s grace who experience suffering and are damned to Hell. With this mindset, early modern thinkers believed that “a well-wrung conscience is itself a hopeful sign, since it shows that the sufferer feels the degradation of his sins” (Quitslund 93). Thus, those who have searched themselves, found their sins, and felt guilt for them may be more prepared to accept God’s grace and therefore become closer to him.

We see this representation of despair in Adam and Eve when they eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Immediately after their fall, the narrator tells readers that “Love was not in their looks, either to God / Or to each other, but apparent guilt, / And shame, and perturbation, and despair” (10.111-13). The fact that the line ends with despair causes the reader to linger on the

word and recognize it as a common theme throughout the text. Here, we are reminded that the fall leads to despair; it did for Satan and Adam and Eve. Furthermore, Adam and Eve both deeply experience despair. Eve's despair brings her to contemplate suicide, just as Synder explains that it often does. The narrator explains Eve's state, "So much of death her thoughts / Had entertained" (10.1008-09). Lost in her despair, Eve almost loses all hope, and tries to convince Adam that they should kill themselves. Adam also expresses feelings of despair. He tells the angel Michael, "What besides / Of sorrow and dejection and despair / Our frailty can sustain" (11.300-02). Adam believes that he only has strength enough to perpetuate feeling despair; he knows that he does not have the strength alone, without God, to do anything other than despair.

Even though Adam and Eve experience despair, unlike Satan, it brings them back to God, just as theologians like Luther suggested. Adam tells Eve that committing suicide would "[cut] [them] off from hope" (10.1043). He knows that this is not the right way to handle their despair; he does not want to relinquish hope, unlike Satan. Instead, he encourages Eve and suggests that they turn to God for help:

How much more, if we pray him, will his ear
Be open, and his heart to pity incline,
And teach us further by what means to shun
Th' inclement seasons, rain, ice, hail, and snow (10.1060-64)

Here, Adam believes that God can help them get through their punishment. He knows that it is up to him to seek God's grace through prayer, and that he has come to the conclusion that he does not have the ability to make it without God. Finally, he states that they must seek God's "grace" (10.1081). Upon stating that it is only by God's grace that they can continue on, both Adam and Eve fall "prostrate" (10.1099) and "both confessed / Humbly their faults, and pardon begged" (10.1100-01). For this reason, the Lord grants them grace. Because God says previously

that all he requires is repentance, their story ends with them “hand in hand” (12.648) leaving Eden with the rest of the world in front of them. Although fallen, they are no longer trapped in their despair. They ask God for forgiveness and leave Paradise with a fuller understanding of God’s grace and mercy. Satan, however, gets to the point of asking for forgiveness and decides he is past saving. He then despairs more and is damned forever because of it. Comparing these two experiences, Satan’s reaction to despair may persuade readers to avoid making his mistake and instead accept God’s grace.

While Satan does not seek grace, Milton also makes it clear that he does not have the ability to, therefore emphasizing the fact that man, represented by Adam and Eve, does have access to grace, and thus should accept it. This fact is made clear in Book Three when God tells his Son what happens to those who fall. He states,

They themselves ordained their fall.
 The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
 Self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls deceived
 By the other first: man therefore shall find grace,
 The other none. (3.128-32)

The first group that God mentions is the angels and Satan. They decided on their own to rebel because of their own ambitions; on the other hand, man fell because he was tempted. He did not set out to disobey God. Therefore, God’s punishment is different for each. The angels and Satan will not be offered grace, whereas man will be. So, while Satan does not actually seek grace, he could not even if he wanted to. This fact should stand out to readers, making them realize that they too, like Adam and Eve, have the ability to accept God’s grace. Even though readers are fallen, like Satan, Adam, and Eve, they have the ability to be reconnected with God through his grace. This correlation might also be considered one of the gaps in the text. While Milton does not explicitly state that he hopes readers will feel the need to accept God’s grace, he makes it

clear that man has the ability to do so. So, while readers have experienced the depths of Hell with Satan and felt his despair, they, unlike him, have the ability to be saved by grace. Because they are human, they do not have to be damned to Hell because of their sins.

As one can see, *Paradise Lost* is very much about the fall away from God, told through two different perspectives. Satan's perspective shows us what happens when one does not accept God's grace, while Adam and Eve's fall shows how one can be redeemed through God's grace. However, it is significant that we experience Satan's fall first so that we can then compare it to Adam and Eve's. In fact, I believe it is why Satan is first made out to be the protagonist/hero of the poem and also why he draws sympathy from his readers. Satan is made hero of the poem so that readers can first experience the trauma of his fall and the decision that he makes to despair and not ask for God's forgiveness (despite whether he has the ability to or not). By going through this experience with Satan and by feeling sympathy toward the way things end for him, readers realize that they themselves do not have to have the same end as Satan. Instead, they are shown how Adam and Eve handle their fall, and readers are given an alternative way to face their own fallenness. They realize that they too have the ability to ask God for forgiveness and accept his grace. Therefore, readers sympathize with and relate to Satan so that they can come to the conclusion that they do not want to end up like him; they will realize that they want to end their fallen stories differently. Therefore, Satan's story serves as a catalyst for readers to accept God's grace and to be thankful for the ability to be saved from falling.

Chapter Two: Implicit Ovidian Allusions in Association with Milton's Satan

During the Early Modern period, there was renewed interest in Classical texts. Educators found value in their style and artists found inspiration from them. The work of the Roman poet Ovid, and the *Metamorphoses* in particular, were especially popular in the period. Mandy Green, for example, explains that “within that narrow but intensively studied grammar-school curriculum, Ovid occupied a uniquely important position, forming an essential part of the reading and writing programme” (3), and Goran V. Stanivukovic cites that “Ovid was central to humanist education” (5). Given Ovid's significant place in the intellectual milieu of the Renaissance, writers such as John Milton used allusions to his stories to help characterize themes or provide context for their stories. In fact, Milton consistently used allusions and references to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when writing *Paradise Lost*; Green posits that “Milton anticipates a readership sympathetically attuned to the same poetic memories” (8) because he would have expected his readers “to have shared his grammar-school education” (3). In other words, he would have anticipated that this readers would easily notice and understand the Ovidian references throughout *Paradise Lost*.

Literary critics of Milton's epic, however, have been particularly interested in why Milton, a Christian poet, would turn to pagan literature to convey Christian themes. For example, Maggie Kilgour and Neil Forsyth have explored the reasons for Milton's choice to use a pagan poet's work in a poem that is supposed to “justify the ways of God to men” (1.26). Kilgour explains that Milton used Ovid's poetry as a way to demonstrate the dominance of Christianity compared to paganism: “The poem's use of Ovidian figures . . . shows the inadequacy of pagan fictions when compared to Christian truths” (7). Forsyth provides another explanation. He points out that Milton's Ovidian references, and especially those pertaining to Satan, help to define evil

for his audience. He states, “The poem is about the origin of evil . . . Milton deploys what he knew to be the various sources for the concept of evil, both the classical and the Christian” (188). In this way, Milton can rely on Ovidian depictions of evil in order to support his own portrayal of evil in Satan.

In this chapter, I would like to specifically examine the implicit Ovidian allusions that Milton uses in correlation with Satan. While other Ovidian allusions certainly exist in *Paradise Lost*, I will particularly explore the allusions that surround Satan, and I will argue that Milton associates Satan with Ovidian figures to accomplish four things: to characterize Satan’s fall as tragic, to depict Satan’s flaws as pride and ambition, to demonstrate the effect of Satan’s fall, and to emphasize postlapsarian transformation. After introducing critical perspectives, I will begin my analysis by first examining Milton’s use of allusions of Icarus and Phaethon, and I will argue that these allusions help to characterize Satan’s fall as tragic and also help to depict Satan’s prideful and ambitious character. Without these classical allusions to tragic descents, readers may not have found Satan’s fall to be tragic, thereby keeping them from relating to or connecting with Satan. As I note in chapter one, this connection with Satan is significant because readers must experience the fall with Satan so that they are moved to accept God’s grace. Furthermore, these allusions also help warn readers to avoid some of the character traits Satan possesses. In the next section of this chapter, I argue that Milton alludes to Satan as a Narcissus figure in order to help readers understand the effect of the fall and to characterize him as a tragic figure; it helps readers understand the torment Satan feels pining after the life he used to have. In the final section, I will examine how Milton tries to emphasize the change that occurs after the fall, primarily the effect of one being separated from God. In doing so, Milton utilizes Ovidian references to change.

Interestingly, all of these Ovidian allusions are implicit and they all serve to highlight aspects of the fall – how it happens, how it should be viewed, and how it changes those it touches. I believe Milton makes these allusions implicit for two reasons. On the one hand, because, as I previously mentioned, he assumed his readers were quite familiar with Ovidian myth and would pick up on such allusions. On the other hand, I believe he made these allusions implicit because these references were not meant to distract readers but to serve as subtle reminders of the fall’s impact. This way, Milton does not have to keep explicitly reminding readers of the fall and its effects, but he can continually call upon these allusions to keep the theme of the fall present in readers’ minds. Furthermore, Milton can continue to make these allusions without sounding repetitive. It assures that Milton’s points about the fall will continually be in the readers’ minds.

Critical Perspectives: Ovidian Allusions and Satan

While many critics have looked at Ovidian allusion and how it is used throughout *Paradise Lost*, some critics have examined the Ovidian allusions in relation to Satan and have come to diverse conclusions. For example, Kilgour argues that Satan is another Narcissus; however, she reads the Narcissus myth in positive terms and says it represents creativity and independence. She argues this positive stance by stating that narcissism causes one to create from themselves – to replicate their own image for the world to see (198). She comes to this conclusion by first claiming that God is a Narcissus figure, because he creates things based upon his own image, much like Narcissus admires his image. Kilgour states that eventually Satan decides to create in his own image: “Rather than rejecting narcissism, therefore, Satan creates an alternative form that reflects himself and not God” (199). She, however, claims that this creation

is detrimental because it is done out of envy. Thus, Satan instigates the fall of man because he is envious of God's power and he wants Adam and Eve to resemble him as a fallen creature.

Ultimately, Kilgour argues that the purpose of Milton's allusion to Narcissus is to demonstrate how quickly creative free will can become detrimental, and how fashioning something after one's self can only lead to a pathetic end, much like Narcissus'.

Different from Kilgour's analysis of Milton's use of Ovid, Richard DuRocher shows how Ovidian references to Satan characterize Satan as a shape-shifter and deceiver; furthermore, he argues that Satan's rhetoric mirrors the rhetoric of Ovidian figures. While the rhetoric may appeal to readers, it also helps to "expose Satan as a hero in a tradition valorizing brute force, willful deception, and self-assertion" (112). The stories in the *Metamorphoses* often involve the gods deceiving or demanding their own way, and since Satan's rhetoric mirrors theirs, it helps to align Satan with those "heroes" making him appear less attractive to readers. DuRocher believes that these allusions eventually tear down Satan's "heroic appearance" (115) and makes him a detestable villain.

Just as Kilgour and DuRocher believe that Milton uses Ovidian references to reveal some aspect of Satan's evil nature – his envy or his deception – Green believes that Milton used Ovidian references to depict the violent nature of Satan's temptation of Eve. Green argues that the temptation scene is sexually charged and that "Satan stops short of, in the literal sense, 'ravishing' Eve" (160). She comes to this conclusion by comparing Satan to Ovid's Jupiter and Vertumnus, who both disguise their figures in order to deceive their "prey" and then rape them. In particular, in Book Fourteen of *The Metamorphoses*, Vertumnus puts on multiple disguises in order to approach Pomona easily, just as Satan, upon his first arrival to the garden, changes his shape frequently in order to get close to and spy on Adam and Eve. Green points out that "the

final disguise in each case allows them both to address their targets directly” (165). These allusions to figures in Ovid who disguise themselves in order to rape their victims makes Satan’s disguise and deception of Eve appear as similarly violent. Satan’s deception suggests that Eve is a victim and displays Satan’s destructive selfishness and use of manipulative force to get what he wants.

Moving forward, I would like to diverge from the suggestion that the use of Ovidian allusion characterizes some aspect of Satan’s evil character, and instead, as I mentioned earlier, propose that Milton makes these allusions in order to characterize the fall, and in particular, Satan’s fall. Critics have yet to focus on the extent to which Ovidian allusion in *Paradise Lost* relates to Satan’s fall, so I believe it is important to address and explore the relationship between the two.

Satan as Tragic: Icarus and Phaethon Myths

Since I am arguing that Satan is a tragic figure and that his status as such makes him more sympathetic to readers, I believe it is important to understand how Milton defined tragedy. According to Milton, tragedy seems to bring about some moral or profitable conclusion. He gains inspiration from Aristotle’s definition of tragedy when he defines tragedy in his preface to *Samson Agonistes*: “Tragedy, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralist, and most profitable of all other poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and suchlike passions” (327). While Satan’s story does not completely fit the mold of tragedy that Aristotle outlines in his *Poetics*, particularly for plot and character reasons, Milton certainly gleaned inspiration from Aristotle in his definition of tragedy, and he seems to have adopted the idea that the goal of a tragedy is to make observers feel “pity and fear” in order to bring about a moral and profitable conclusion. I

argue that Satan most certainly fits that definition because his fallen state makes readers feel “pity” for him and also encourages them to accept grace as opposed to ending up like him.

Therefore Satan’s tragedy leads to a profitable outcome for readers.

To understand how Milton may have used Ovidian allusions to characterize Satan’s fall as tragic, it is important to note that when Milton first began writing *Paradise Lost* he originally began writing it as a tragic play, “Adam unparadiz’d” (Forsyth 136), as opposed to an epic poem. In fact, one of the first things he wrote for this tragedy was Satan’s speech in Book Four on top of Mount Niphates. John Carey states that “Edward Phillips, Milton’s nephew, tells us [Satan’s speech] was written . . . at a time when Milton intended to write a tragedy on the Fall” (163). So, even though *Paradise Lost* became an epic, it appears as though Milton imagined and wrote Satan with tragedy in mind. Furthermore, the narrator of the poem characterizes the fall as tragic in the first few lines of Book Nine, the book where Adam and Eve’s fall occurs. Here, the narrator introduces the book by saying “I now must change / Those notes to tragic” (9.5-6). Clearly, Milton was characterizing the fall in this moment as something tragic, even if he was speaking of Adam and Eve’s fall, the same categorization of the fall can still be applied to Satan because Satan was separated from God just as Adam and Eve were.

To further support the idea that Milton believed that Satan’s fall was tragic, I believe that Milton interchangeably used references of Ovidian tragic figures, Icarus and Phaethon, to characterize Satan. These references help to portray Satan’s fall as tragic, thereby evoking sympathy for Satan from readers. This sympathy is significant because, as I argue in chapter one, readers’ feelings of sympathy toward Satan encourages them to realize that they do not want to end up like him, and therefore they will be moved to accept God’s grace. Allusions to Phaethon and Icarus also serve to illustrate Satan’s flaws in order to discourage readers from replicating

his mistakes. In Ovid's famous versions of the Icarus and Phaethon myths, both figures fall from the sky to their demise. In Icarus's case, he ignored his father Daedalus' guidance to follow him and not fly too low or too high (8.219-275)⁶; instead, his "Guide [he] forsooke: / And rausht with desire of heaven, aloft / Ascends" (8.61-63). Flying too close to the sun melted his waxy wings, and he fell to his death in the sea. Through this story, we see Icarus leave his authority figure, enticed by his own ambition, and fall to his death because he left his father's guidance. Similarly, Phaethon ignores his father's cautioning and chooses to drive his father's chariot in the sky (2.21-362). Comparable to Daedalus, Apollo gives Phaethon specific instructions on how to fly the chariot so that he returns safely. Too eager to fly, Phaethon ignores his father's advice; however, once in the sky, he realizes he does not know how to drive the chariot and he causes fire to rain down on the earth. He eventually gets cast down by Jove with a lighting bolt and falls to his death: "Phaëton, with blazing haire, / Shot head-long through a long descent of Aire; / As when a falling starre glides through the skie" (2.353-55). Both of these stories relate how too much ambition, pride, and the avoidance of guidance from an authority figure can cause one to fall and to die, and therefore relate quite well to Satan's situation. Furthermore, David Quint cites that "Renaissance poets would similarly juxtapose the two [Icarus and Phaethon] as figures of excessive pride and immaturity" (847). Therefore, as Quint suggests, early modern readers would have been familiar with the idea that Icarus and Phaethon represent arrogance and irresponsibility. Thus, early modern readers would probably easily make the connection between these Ovidian figures and Milton's Satan because Satan's own pride and misguided ambition caused his fall away from his authority figure, God. Furthermore, Icarus and Phaethon were

⁶ For all of my textual references to Ovid, I have chosen to use George Sandys' English translation of the *Metamorphoses* that was published in 1632 because it is an edition that could have been available for Milton to read and use when he wrote *Paradise Lost*.

considered foolish for their decisions; similarly, Satan's pride and ambition make him look foolish and discourage readers from those behaviors.

One of the first ways that Milton establishes a connection between Satan and Phaethon occurs in Book Two when Satan first flies to earth. This serves to connect the two early on in the poem, linking the horrific imagery of Phaethon's fall with Satan's flight in order to associate the tragedy of Phaethon with Satan. The narrator says that he flies as if "in a cloudy chair ascending rides" (2.930) surrounded by "surging smoke" (2.928). The smoke recalls the fiery mess that Phaethon creates by driving the chariot improperly, and the chair could remind readers of the chariot. Also, the narrator describes Satan as being "Audacious" (2.930), and this may relate to Phaethon's attitude too. Audacious means "daring, bold," ("audacious" Adj. 1), but it also means "unrestrained by, or setting at defiance, the principles of decorum and morality" ("audacious" Adj. 2). Phaethon was daring and bold when he asked to drive the chariot, yet he defied what was right when he decided to avoid the warnings his father gave him about driving the chariot. Satan acts in a similar way. He was bold in his stance against God, yet he was acting against what he knew to be right by defying God. We can also note the similarity between Phaethon and Satan in this passage with the description of Satan being "all unawares" (2.932) as he "drops / Ten thousand fathom deep, and to this hour / Down had been falling" (2.933-5). Phaethon experiences something similar because he too becomes unaware of exactly what is happening and does not know what to do as the chariot and its horses fly out of control: "He knowes not where he is, nor what succeeds" (2.277). And then he, too, falls down out of the sky. Both driven by ambition, Satan and Phaethon each have moments in their flight where they lose control and do not know what to do. Therefore, this first flight by Satan subtly alludes to Phaethon's tragic flight, framing Satan's position as a tragic one.

To further encourage the tragic connection between Satan's fall and the falls of Icarus and Phaethon, Milton consistently uses the word "fall" in connection to Satan. In Book One, for example, Milton depicts Satan and the rebel angels' rebellion as "fall[ing] off / From their Creator" (1.30-1). In this portion of text, Milton uses "fall" interestingly. He describes Satan as falling off from God as if he were a piece that was connected to him. It signals the intimacy and closeness of their relationship because to be a physical piece of something means that you are connected to it. As a piece of God, Satan belonged to God, which also implies that he was taken care of and loved. One could not get closer to anything than to be a part of it. Therefore, since Satan "fell off" from his "Creator" he was no longer a piece of him; he was completely disconnected from that close relationship. To further emphasize the closeness of their previous relationship, Milton refers to God as Satan's "Creator." As opposed to just using the word "God" or "Lord," "Creator" implies a loving and intentional relationship. To fall off from that kind of relationship would be devastating. This breaking off from God is further depicted a few lines later. In these lines, Milton makes two implicit allusions to Phaethon by first noting Satan's "ambitious aim" (1.41) and then by mimicking aspects of Phaethon's fall with Satan's fall from heaven: "Hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky / With hideous ruin and combustion down" (1.45-6). Just as Phaethon is struck down from the sky by Jupiter and falls to his death surrounded in flames and the ruin he created, so does Satan as he is struck down from heaven by God and falls into Hell. The imagery of these two falls connects Satan and Phaethon, making their falls appear as graphic and horrific. These images serve to foster the tragic nature of their falls as Satan breaks away from his Creator, losing a piece of himself – the connection he had with God – and falls into the flames of Hell, just as Phaethon leaves his loving father and ends his life in smoke and flames.

Another way readers can link Satan, Phaethon, and Icarus is that they all fall to their destruction because they disobey their authority figure. Like both Icarus and Phaethon, Satan abandons his heavenly authority in favor of his own desires. Quint notices this connection and states, “Like the mythic Icarus, Satan has disobeyed his father and aspired too high” (860). However, what makes Satan’s situation even more tragic is that he continues to fall as opposed to meeting his end. In Book Four, Satan expresses how he is still falling: “the lower still I fall” (4.91). Thus, unlike Icarus and Phaethon, who eventually die from their falls, Satan continues to feel the effect of his fall. In this way, we see Satan in a worse condition than Icarus and Phaethon because he continually suffers. For this reason, Milton may have used the tragic figures of Icarus and Phaethon in order to relate how much more tragic falling away from God is. Furthermore, while Icarus and Phaethon’s falls were physical ones, Satan experiences both a physical fall, from Heaven to Hell, and a spiritual fall. Satan’s spiritual fall separates him from God, everything that is good, loving, and pleasurable. When Icarus and Phaethon fall, they lose their human lives, yet Satan’s fall, since it is more than just a physical fall, precludes any hope for happiness and love and leaves him conscious of this loss. What Satan loses could be considered much worse than death because he is forever conscious of the separation he has experienced. Therefore, through this difference, Milton may be suggesting that Satan’s fall is even more tragic than Icarus and Phaethon’s because he is consistently reminded of his loss and must forever endure the separation his fall induced.

Book Four uses the words “fall” and “fell” and “fly” as a way to connect Satan with Phaethon and Icarus and their tragic ends; it helps to remind readers of the reason for Satan’s fall and relate how much more tragic his situation is. For example, in Satan’s speech on Mount Niphates, Satan mentions “fall” and “fell” both twice and twice uses the word “fly” (4.32-113).

In his speech, Satan bemoans his fall and wonders if he might repent; while the subject of his speech stems from his fall, he continually uses other imagery that points to Icarus and Phaethon which help to remind his readers of why he fell. In the beginning of his speech, for example, he addresses the sun and relates the sun to his fall, just as the sun caused Icarus' fall: "O sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams / That bring to my remembrance from what state / I fell" (4.37-9). The enjambed line draws attention to Satan's falling because it forces the reader, after two long lines, to linger on the word "fell." This pause encourages the reader to reflect on Satan's fall just as Satan himself says he is remembering his fall. Furthermore, just as Icarus drowns, Satan, in this speech, uses similar imagery to describe his situation: "And in the lowest deep a lower deep / Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide" (4.76-7). These words point to Satan drowning with the repetition of the word "deep." Just as the water devours Icarus, Satan is trapped and drowning in Hell. Later in Book Four, after Satan has been caught in Eden, Gabriel reminds him that "Satan fell, whom folly overthrew" (4.905), and again reminds him that his banishment to hell he "incurr'st by flying" (4.913). These references to falling and flying continually connect Satan to Icarus and Phaethon, reminding readers of the tragedy of their falls, yet reminding readers that Satan is in a more tragic position because he is forever trapped drowning in Hell.

While ambition was one of the causes for Satan, Icarus and Phaethon's falls, Satan's ambition was loftier, thus causing his fall to be more tragic because he had further to fall. Because Satan was ambitious, he believed he deserved the position that the Son of God was given, and it made him feel that he had the right to fight and overtake God. Raphael explains Satan's reaction to Christ being honored:

Fraught
With envy against the Son of God, that day
Honored by his great Father, and proclaimed
Messiah King anointed, could not bear

Through pride that sight, and thought himself impaired. (5.661-5)

In this passage, we see that Satan felt frustrated and hurt that he was not put in this high position, especially because he was a favorite Archangel “great in power, / In favor and preeminence” (5.660-1). He felt “envy” toward God’s chosen Messiah, and it made him feel “impaired.” He saw himself reduced in power and was made to feel less competent. He hoped for more and he did not receive it, so he felt he had to take what he deserved. He believed he had the right and was powerful enough to have a higher station in Heaven. Thus, just like Icarus who desired to get closer to the sun or Phaethon who wanted to control his father’s horses, Satan did not have the ability to control his situation; he aspired for something greater but he just could not measure up and so he lost the war in Heaven and his high position. He, like Icarus and Phaethon, fell because he aspired too high. However, different from Icarus and Phaethon, Satan’s aspirations were loftier. He wanted to be raised to the position of King, whereas Icarus only wanted to fly closer to the sun and Phaethon only wanted to drive his father’s chariot and horses. His aspirations were greater, therefore he had farther to fall when he did not achieve what he had hoped. Thus, once again, his fall appears as more tragic than that of Icarus and Phaethon.

Satan’s Flaws

While implicit allusions to Icarus and Phaethon help to characterize Satan’s fall as tragic, thereby eliciting sympathy from readers, Milton’s allusions to Icarus and Phaethon also help to establish Satan’s flaws and discourage readers from espousing similar attributes. While the consequence for Icarus and Phaethon’s foolish actions is human death, the consequence for Satan’s flaws is complete separation from God, which serves as a warning to readers against acting in a similar way.

One of the primary flaws that Satan shares with Icarus and Phaethon is pride. As I previously mentioned, Quint states that early modern poets often represented Phaethon and Icarus as “figures of excessive pride and immaturity” (847). If Renaissance poets felt that these figures exemplified pride, it is easy to see how they could be related to Satan. Continually throughout the poem, readers see that Satan’s pride and foolish ambition caused his fall. Milton repeatedly assigns the word “pride” to Satan in Book One; in fact, he applies it to Satan five times in that first book. In this way, the multiple references to pride help to foreshadow the later allusions to Satan as an Icarus or Phaethon figure. For example, just a few lines into Book One, Satan is introduced as one whose “pride / Had cast him out from Heav’n” (1.36-7). Then, upon surveying his situation in Hell, the narrator tells us that he looks upon the situation with “obdurate pride” (1.58). In other words, Satan still feels his swollen pride even though he has fallen because of it. Later, it is still Satan’s “wonted pride” (1.527) that inspires the other fallen angels and “gently raised / Their fainting courage, and dispelled their fears” (1.529-30). His pride fools others into thinking he is a good leader, despite the fact his pride helped cause their fall. Finally, the last two references to pride in Book One have to do with Satan’s resolve to tempt man into sin. The narrator notes that Satan “[waits for] revenge” (1.604) with “considerate pride” (1.603). His pride, although it caused his fall, continues to prod him to act independently and self-servingly. These references in Book One to Satan’s pride help to associate him with Icarus and Phaethon and makes pride a despicable characteristic that only leads to separation from God. Furthermore, later references to pride help to remind readers of this connection. In Book Four, Satan finally recognizes that pride is his flaw when he states “pride and worse ambition threw me down” (4.40). Both Phaethon and Icarus exert this same type of pride when they ignore the warnings of their fathers because of their ambition and excitement to go off on

their own. Their confidence in themselves causes them to ignore all warnings and thus they do fail in their ambitions, just like Satan. Satan's belief that he could act independently of God, his pride in himself, causes him to suffer his fall.

Similar to pride, another of Satan's flaws that is compared to Icarus and Phaethon is his ambition. Milton repeatedly uses the words "high" and "higher" in Satan's speech on Mount Niphates in order to remind readers of the dangerous heights Icarus and Phaethon reached before they fell to their deaths and to allude to the ambitious and high aims that eventually caused Satan and Ovid's high flyers' downfalls. We can come to this conclusion because there is another definition of the word "high" besides signifying a physically high position. This second definition is as follows: "of exalted rank, station, dignity, position, or estimation" ("high"). This definition speaks to Satan's overly ambitious nature, which also mirrors Icarus and Phaethon. As an example of the double meaning of the word "high," Satan states, "lifted up so high / I 'sdained subjection, and thought one step higher / Would set me highest" (4.49-51). Just as Icarus flew higher hoping to reach the sun, Satan aspired to more power, and instead of obtaining the power he wanted, he incurred punishment. His one step higher was as dangerous a height as Icarus's flight, but also, he reveals that he knows his desire for more power caused his fall. Already in a position of leadership, he wanted more power and thought it was close at hand. This feeling of deserving more led to his destruction. He wanted to be physically "higher" like Icarus, but also higher in terms of rank or position. This ambition fueled his pride and caused his downfall. He allowed his desire for something greater to cloud his judgment and ultimately cause his ruin. This situation serves as a warning to readers to avoid the pitfalls of greed, because Satan's desire for more clouded his judgment and keeps him from asking God for forgiveness. His greed keeps him separated from God.

In order to accentuate the idea that Satan reached too “high” and thus caused his fall, Milton uses the word “high” frequently throughout the temptation scene between Satan and Eve. The repetitious use of “high” also serves to foreshadow Eve’s fall. For example, the word “high” appears when Satan talks to Eve about how he came to taste the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. He says that he “wound” (9.589) himself around the tree’s trunk in order to climb to obtain the fruit: “for high from the ground the branches would require” (9.590). This imagery subtly reminds us that Satan aspired to a higher station before his fall. In order to get to what he wanted, he had to climb higher; however, his greedy aspiration caused him to fall. Similarly, the fruit, which is high in the branches, is something Eve desires. She must reach high in order to pick one off of the tree, but when she eats the fruit it will cause her to fall. Satan plays on Eve’s desire to eat the fruit when he states that God only ordered her to not eat from the tree in order to “keep [her] low and ignorant” (9.704). The word “low” reminds readers of the position Satan felt he had when the Son of God was crowned King. This low position made Satan aspire to a greater, higher position. In the same way, he tries to persuade Eve that by not eating the fruit she is stuck in a low position. He plays on her desire to have knowledge and be greater by eating the fruit. She chooses to eat the fruit for this reason, so she too, like Satan, aspires to more and experiences the fall because of it. And, once again, the word “high” continues to associate Satan with Icarus and Phaethon and how their destruction was a consequence of their “high” aspirations.

Allusions to Narcissus: Depicting the Effect of the Fall

While references to Icarus and Phaethon help to emphasize Satan’s pride and misplaced ambition in order to characterize Satan’s fall as tragic, Milton’s allusion to another Ovidian

figure, Narcissus, also helps to characterize Satan as a tragic figure. The allusion to Narcissus causes readers to think about Satan's emotional state and how he feels about being fallen, and it helps readers realize the utter distress and turmoil Satan feels because of his fall. For this reason, he appears as tragic. Satan's story is similar to Narcissus' because Satan longs for what he cannot possess. In Ovid's story of Narcissus, he falls in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Not knowing that what he loves is his own reflection, he stays with his beloved, all the while wishing he could reach out and touch this beautiful creature. Eventually, he withers away, still longing for what he cannot have: "As Virgin wax dissolves with fervent heat; / Or morning frost, whereon the Sunne-beames beat / So thaws he with the ardor of desire" (Ovid 3.544-46). The heat of his "desire" causes him to melt away like wax, and so Narcissus can be seen as tragic because he was stuck longing for what he could not have.

Generally, when critics write about the Narcissus allusion in *Paradise Lost*, they refer to Eve's creation story in Book Four. They often compare Eve with Narcissus because of how she stares in a pool of water at her reflection and "pined with vain desire" (4.466) after it. Kilgour notes that the significant difference between Eve and Narcissus, however, is that Eve leaves her reflection for Adam, instead of disappearing into nothing like Narcissus (332). Though critics often mention the allusion to Narcissus with Eve, they have yet to note that Satan, similar to Narcissus, longs for what he cannot possess. One makes this connection when reading Satan's exclamation that he is "still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines" (4.511). This repetition of the verb "pine" follows the mention of Eve's "pined" only 45 lines later, while her allusion to Narcissus is still lingering on readers' minds. Thus, it helps strengthen the comparison to Narcissus. Furthermore, George Sandys' 1632 English translation of Ovid uses the word "pine" to describe what Narcissus is doing. Narcissus, crying out in pain and speaking to his

surroundings says, “From your first growth to this long distant day / Haue you knowne any, thus to pine away!” (3.492-3). Narcissus acknowledges that he believes no one has ever pined after something to such an extent before. One might even suggest that this use of the verb “pine” helps to strengthen the comparison between Narcissus and Eve and Satan. However, readers realize that Satan, unlike Eve, is stuck forever pining after what he can no longer have. Narcissus was unknowingly in love with his reflection, and he was never able to have what he most longed for; similarly, Satan no longer has access to God and God’s love. He can no longer feel happiness or be a part of Paradise. While he pines after it, he feels distressed because he knows he will never possess it again. He, like Narcissus, will only be stuck wishing for what he wants.

While Narcissus appears as a tragic figure because he dies pining after what he cannot have, I argue that Satan appears as more tragic than Narcissus because he recognizes that he is stuck forever pining after what he used to have. Unlike Narcissus, who never could connect with his image, Satan actually had been connected to God, had been in a high position in Heaven, and had known happiness. After the fall, those things got stripped away from him forever. His desire for what he could not have induces a stronger tinge of pain because he used to have it. Also different from the Narcissus story is what happens to Satan. While Narcissus withers away, Satan is left pining forever: “I to Hell am thrust / Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire, / Among our other torments not the least” (4.508-10). He continually feels the torment of his situation, while Narcissus eventually escapes his. Therefore, readers may feel as though Satan’s situation is much worse and therefore even more tragic.

Later in Book Four, Milton again alludes to Narcissus when discussing Satan. This time, he alludes to the sexual connotation that is implied in the Narcissus myth. Narcissus, in love with himself, longs to touch and be with his reflection. This hints at underlying sexual tones, and we

can see this tone applied to Satan as well. After Satan is found crouching by Eve's ear, the Cherub Zephon scolds him and tells him to leave Eden. While they are debating, Satan observes the loveliness of the Cherub; it reminds him of Heaven and makes him long to reside there again. The narrator states that Satan "Felt how awful goodness is, and saw / Virtue in her shape how lovely, saw, and pined / His loss" (4.847-9). The use of the verb "pined" takes readers back to earlier in Book Four when the first Narcissus reference was made, and thus hints to readers that this too is another subtle allusion to Narcissus. To further support the allusion, we see Satan pining after the appearance of the Cherub, similar to how the reflection of Narcissus's image made him fall in love and desire to possess it. Also, the Cherub makes Satan "feel" and "see" his loss. The Cherub stands as a symbol for what Satan used to have, thus being another reminder of what he no longer has. The Cherub reflects what Satan once had just as the pool reflects the image that Narcissus wants. This moment is significant because it emphasizes once again the tragedy of Satan's inability to know and have what he once did. He is subjected to always pine after it and be reminded of the life he wishes he could have. This continuous pining seems to be a condition of Satan's fall. He continuously desires what he can no longer have just as he continuously falls further and further away from God: "the lower still I fall" (4.91). Just as his fall away from God is tragic, he too is a tragic figure because of his fall.

Allusions to Change: Consequences of the Fall

The other major Ovidian presence in *Paradise Lost* is the allusion to change. The entirety of Ovid's work is about change, as the title suggests. Furthermore, the first line of the *Metamorphoses* explains that the poem's topic is change: "Of bodies chang'd to other shapes I sing" (1.1). Throughout much of the poem, gods and goddesses change their form or change

others into a different form. For example, Daphne is changed into a laurel tree in order to protect her from the affections of Apollo, and Actaeon gets changed into a stag as a punishment for seeing Diana naked. Regardless of the reason for the change, each metamorphosis drastically affects each person. Similarly, *Paradise Lost* depicts a change – the fall of the angels and of man. This change also drastically affects those it touches because it separates them from God and physically removes them from Heaven and Paradise. Therefore, in order to accentuate this change in Milton's retelling of the fall, he uses Ovidian allusion to emphasize elements of change depicted throughout *Paradise Lost*.

To emphasize this idea of change, Milton characterizes Satan as one who has the ability to easily change himself. Since Satan's fall changed his relationship with God, he now has to deceive those around him in order to try to get what he wants. Therefore, Satan uses his ability to shape-shift in order to deceive others, just as many of the figures in the *Metamorphoses* do. Thus, the changing of his physical form helps to highlight how Satan has been affected by his fall, how he has changed because of it⁷. The way that Satan's shape-shifting abilities relate to Ovid's figures is that Ovid's figures often change their shape in order to deceive. For example, Jove often takes another form in order to get close to women and rape them, as he did in the case when he disguised himself as Diana to get close to Callisto and then rape her. Similarly, Satan disguises himself for his own manipulative purposes. He first disguises himself at the end of Book Three when he presents himself to Uriel as a Cherub and asks for passage to earth. His changed form tricks Uriel into letting him go to earth. Later, Satan, like Vertumnus who

⁷ While I am drawing from DuRocher's argument that Satan's ability to shape-shift mirrors Ovidian figures because he shape-shifts in order to deceive, I'm adding to DuRocher's reading by saying that Satan's need to shape-shift in order to deceive emphasizes his changed status as a fallen angel. Since he is fallen, he now has a reason to deceive; therefore, I believe his ability to change his form emphasizes how he has changed because of the fall.

disguises himself in various ways in order to get close to Pomona, changes his shape in order to stalk Adam and Eve and learn how best to manipulate them: “Of those four-footed kinds, himself now one, / Now other, as their shape served best his end / Nearer to view his prey, and unespied” (4.397-99). Not only does Satan’s ability to change his form help him get close to Adam and Eve without being noticed, but it also allows him to trick Eve into trusting him. As a serpent, Satan is able to convince Eve to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. She, “amazed” (9.614) that a snake could speak as a human, becomes convinced that eating from the forbidden tree will only give her more knowledge. His disguise, which allows him to trick Eve into committing humankind’s first sin, works in the same way that many of the shape-shifters in the *Metamorphoses* work. It allows them to get close enough to their victims in order to commit their crime against them. Therefore, Satan’s ability to change forms is manipulative like many Ovidian figures, and it emphasizes his changed status as a fallen angel, because as a fallen angel, he now finds it necessary to be deceptive.

Milton also highlights the change the fall brings when he describes the fall. For instance, some of the first words Satan utters after his fall have to do with how he has changed. He groans, “O how fall’n! how changed / From him, who in the happy realms of light / Clothed with transcendent brightness did outshine” (1.84-6). In these lines, Satan connects the fall with being changed. By stating “how changed” right after he states “how fall’n!” he ties the two together, relating that to be fallen means to have changed. Furthermore, he contrasts this change by comparing the “happy realms of light” to the “utter darkness” (1.72) that he has found himself in in Hell. Later in Book One, still in distress over his fall, the narrator explains that Satan was still “Under amazement of their hideous change” (1.313). In this line, readers can see that Milton characterizes the effect of the fall as a “change.” Here, in the beginning of the poem, Milton sets

out for readers the idea that to be fallen means to have experienced a change. Similarly, Milton follows this characterization later in the poem as well, when Eve describes her fall as a “change.” Upon contemplating whether or not she should tell Adam that she has eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, Eve says, “Shall I to him make known / As yet my change” (9.817-8). These lines indicate that Eve sees her fall as incurring a change; she recognizes that she is different after eating the fruit from the forbidden tree. In this way, readers can see that Milton clearly correlates the fall with a change.

Later in the poem, Milton again describes the fall as a change that occurs. For example, Satan foreshadows Adam and Eve’s fall when he plots his revenge. He states, “Ah gentle pair, ye little think how nigh / Your change approaches, when all these delights / Will vanish and deliver ye to woe” (4.366-8). Upon thinking about how he will trick Adam and Eve so that they fall away from God, he refers to their fall as their “change.” He further emphasizes this change when he explains how their “delights / Will vanish” and then turn to “woe.” The juxtaposition of “delight” and “woe” serves to demonstrate how drastic the change is that one experiences from falling away from God. “Delight” and “woe” are opposites, like “light” and “darkness.” Satan characterized his fall away from God using “light” and “darkness,” two opposing properties. Therefore, the similarities in comparison - using stark opposites – to characterize the effect of the fall help to emphasize the fact that the fall brings about a radical change.

Just as Satan hints that Adam and Eve will soon fall away from God by stating that their “change approaches,” he convinces Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge by promising her that it will change her. While Eve does not expect this change to occur because she will fall, despite the warning she has received from God about eating from the tree, Satan’s promise that a change will occur reminds the audience that the change that will take place will be because of the fall.

Satan deceives Eve by emphasizing the change that will occur by eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Satan argues that eating the fruit will change her from a mere human to a god. He states, “ye shall be as gods, / Knowing both good and evil as they know” (9.708-9). Satan clarifies that even though God threatened that eating from the tree meant that Adam and Eve would die, he says that this death is only a human death and that they will reawaken as gods: “So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off / Human, to put on gods, death to be wished” (9.713-4). He signifies that there will be a transformation; by eating the fruit they will change. Even though death sounds like a bad punishment, it allows them to become something greater. Eve then articulates that she is convinced by this reasoning because the fruit “gave elocution to the mute” (9.748). Since the serpent has the ability to speak after eating from the Tree of Knowledge, since he changed, she believes her change will be just as impressive and desirable. So, while Satan convinces Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge by promising her a change, he again reminds the audience that the fall offers a change, even though he disguises this change as a desirable one.

Altogether, Milton uses Ovidian allusion to characterize the fall as more tragic than the stories of classical tragic figures, to warn readers of sinful character traits, and to emphasize the change that occurs because of the fall. He uses something familiar to his audience, Ovidian allusions, in order to put into perspective how catastrophic the fall away from God was and how unfortunate our fallen nature is. In this way, the Ovidian allusions emphasize how much Milton’s readers need God’s grace because they too are affected by this “change.” It encourages readers to turn to God because they will see the tragedy and despair that comes from being separated from him. They will come to the conclusion that they should seek God because only he can bring them back from their fallen state.

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