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**Operating in a Fallen Vehicle: How the Corrupted Language of *Paradise Lost*
Serves Milton's God**

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Abstract of the Thesis

Operating in a Fallen Vehicle: How the Corrupted Language of *Paradise Lost* Serves

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This essay explores the significance of Milton's use of poetic language, the cultural byproduct of what would be considered fallen language, in *Paradise Lost* as a means to highlight God's uniqueness from the other beings of the poem, including the Speaker, and thus bolstering his goal to justify the ways of God to man. By looking at all of the different beings in this poem as existing in a hierarchical structure, it becomes apparent that the further a being exists away from God, who exists as the purest being of the hierarchy and is therefore placed at the top, the more dramatic and colloquial his or her language becomes. In order to examine why the vernaculars of this hierarchical structure are important to Milton's overall cause, this study provides a close analysis of the epic, as well as engages with several other studies conducted by notable Miltonic scholars. The result demonstrates that Milton embraces fallen poetic language not only because it thrived as the literary language of his and his audience's time period, but also to ease his audience up the hierarchical structure in an attempt to bring them closer to God. By depicting God's language as unique and not relatable, Milton reveals how a fallen audience must work hard to climb the hierarchical ladder before obtaining a position closer to that of God.

This is dedicated to the faculty and staff of Stony Brook University's English Department for their continued guidance and encouragement, and to my fellow graduate students who have been a true source of inspiration and community.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my family and friends, who have courageously admitted to knowing that bizarre, sleep-deprived man who was muttering to himself about the poetry of a guy who has been dead for over 300 years.

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I. Introduction: The Linguistic Hierarchy

Readers of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* encounter a number of different types of beings throughout the epic. A hierarchical system divides each of these beings, positioning the just and unfallen near or at the very top of the system and the evil and fallen at the bottom. The natural states of these beings determine their place in this hierarchy and their language reflects these inward natures that dictate such placement. The manner in which any of the poem's characters speak, and the purpose for which they use that speech, helps define where they are in relation to God in the universe. Understanding this hierarchy or spectrum of language requires an understanding of how Milton regarded the modes in which language is communicated to an audience and for what purpose.

Milton, along with a number of his contemporaries, views logic and rhetoric as two separate modes of communicative thought. Logic communicates pure truth; a "form of discourse [that] is determined by the nature of the thing he contemplates rather than by the desire to project a personality (ethos) or please a specific audience (pathos)" (Fish, 62). Logical speech does not require dramatic effect or the need to captivate an audience, but rather follows a method of unveiling the total truth behind a subject. Milton regards rhetoric as a different form of speech from logic, and instead treats it as a form that serves a different purpose and emphasizes ethos and pathos more so than logos. The language of rhetoric relies on the audience having their emotions appealed to in order to build up the credibility of the speaker. It does not require logic but must capture the attention of the audience. While logic focuses on displaying the bare truth, rhetoric can obscure the truth and often relies on poetic language to aid in the persuading of an audience. For Milton, "poetry's demands are illegitimate because they proceed from, and return to, the affections," to "art-truth [which] is psychological and self-centered" (Fish, 69) rather than

pure truth that is absent of vain desire. Therefore, the spectrum of language that makes up the hierarchical system of Milton's beings is rooted in the differences between logic and rhetoric.

At the top of this hierarchy in Milton's poem is God himself, who first appears in Book 3 and speaks with a logical methodology that uses literal language. God's language expresses a reflection of reality in its actuality, in universal truths. His language is honest and absent of poetic devices, making it the purest use of language in the poem. This aspect of God's speech is revealed in Book 3 when Milton introduces the character of God to the reader. His language follows a logical and critical method that attempts to get to the truth of a particular subject matter. He conducts this method in his opening speech with a series of questions about why Adam will choose to fall (3.96-111). His line of questioning will produce an answer rooted in factual truth exemplifying the honesty in his mode of speech. God presents the truth as it is, without metaphor or dramatic dialogue. These aspects of his language will be further explored later in this essay.

Similar to God, the angels who reside in Heaven use language that speaks only in truths. When Raphael relates Heaven's history in Books 5-8, his words are to be taken as an honest account that possesses no ulterior motives to deceive Adam. The unfallen angels always say what they intend to do and provide honest reasons for their actions, such as Abdiel's soliloquy in Book 6, when he boasts about his intentions to meet Satan on the battlefield. He does not intend to fight for glory or vanity, but for God's justice and reason. When Abdiel states he dislikes war because he finds it "brutish" and "foul" (6.124), the reader knows he is speaking the truth because it was Abdiel in Book 5 who tried to use words and reason to combat Satan's rebellion. Like God, what they say reflects the truth, but unlike God, their language is not always so literal. The angels are prone to using poetic devices such as metaphor, which obscures a true depiction

of reality by not stating what simply is. Though their words maintain an honest account of reality, their mingling with poetic language corrupts the purity of that truth.

Pre-fallen Adam and Eve have a language similar to the angels, but the potential for manipulative, deceitful language appears present in how Adam and Eve speak to each other in Book 9. When Eve tries to persuade Adam to let her go off by herself, she changes the discussion from being centered on the threat of their “foe” (9.280), Satan, to a discussion about how Adam “misthought” (9.289) of her ability to fend off temptation. Adam hopes to appease her with “healing words” (9.290), and when he fails to convince her to want to stay he tries to disguise his true feelings on the matter by permitting her to go off on her own. However, because they are not yet fallen, their rhetorical skills are left wanting.

Unlike Adam and Eve, Satan, who is placed at the bottom of the hierarchical structure along with his army of other fallen angels, is a master of rhetorical speech and manipulation. Satan is an artful orator, as first witnessed in Book 1, whose language is brimming with poetic devices, such as the epic boasting of refusing to “submit or yield” (1.108) to God. He utilizes such devices along with emotional appeals to manipulate and deceive others, exemplified in the way he asserts his rule over the fallen angels by invoking their fear of God in Book 2 or by the flattering language he uses to address characters like Sin, Night, and Eve throughout the epic. Fallen language is not always literal, and the artfulness of this type of speech allows for a more complex language that corrupts the singular literalness depicted in God’s words. Once Adam and Eve fall, their language becomes the same as that of the fallen angels; that is, they are capable of lying like Eve’s dishonest claim that she wanted Adam to share the fruit with her in Book 9, to Adam’s use of synonymous words like referring to the serpent as “worm” (9.1068). This thesis

will later analyze in greater detail the use of language by each type of being and how it relates to their placement in the hierarchical structure.

Much has already been written on the significance of language in *Paradise Lost*, most notably by Stanley Fish, who proposed that the poem is meant to “educate the reader to an awareness of his [own] position as a fallen man, and to a sense of the distance which separates him from the innocence once his,” as well as “re-create in the mind of the reader... the drama of the Fall, to make him fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam’s troubled clarity, that is to say, ‘not deceived’” (Fish, 1). Fish’s argument relies on language as an important component in the reader’s education. The characters’ different modes of speech reflect their inward natures and therefore their place in the hierarchal structure. The distinction in the use of language between unfallen and fallen man should stand out to the reader or hearer of the poem, highlighting the loss of innocence humanity once possessed because the change in vernacular coincides with a change in how Adam and Eve think. For example, Eve becomes much more manipulative after her fall, wondering to herself, “But to Adam in what sort / shall I appear?” (9.816-17). Eve debates whether or not she should attempt to conceal her transgression to Adam. Eve only decides to approach Adam when she fears dying alone, and goes to him with loving, tender words such as when she tells him, “thee I have missed” (8.557) and that she felt deprived of his presence. This example, as well as others that shall be further discussed below, reveal how change in behavior and status is reflected in the language and thoughts of the characters. The “fit audience” (7.31) should be able to see beyond man’s speech; however, and realize how his or her own vernacular closely resembles Satan’s own speech and how it is not anywhere near the level of God’s logical dialogue. But understanding Milton’s intentions must go beyond simply noticing this distinction; the reader should be careful to notice that God sits as the higher, more

just end of the hierarchal structure. By overlooking God's purity in favor of Satan's relatable passion, the reader risks being enticed by Satan's rhetoric, causing him or her to consider Satan's position. The reader then falls along with Adam and only near the poem's end does he or she belatedly understand that poem has made it explicitly clear that Satan could not fulfil the role of hero of this epic. The familiar and artful rhetoric easily corrupts the reader because Satan speaks as common man does and he expresses relatable emotions. Satan uses cunning language and seduces the reader with a poetic sounding style that refers back to literary genre tropes that Milton's contemporary readers would have been familiar with. Thus Milton, through Satan, seduces his readers into falling by invoking the literary poetic styles that were well known traits of literary culture. A Renaissance audience would view an epic "as a heterocosm or compendium of subjects, forms, and styles" (Lewalski, "Genres" 115). Understanding the language of the literary genres present *Paradise Lost* can aid in understanding how Milton devised what Fish describes as an educational trap.

A seventeenth century audience would have recognized the epic structure and dramatic qualities present in Milton's epic because "the Renaissance is a period of heightened genre consciousness in literary theory and poetic practice" (Lewalski, "Genres" 113). The lower that a being exists on the hierarchical scale, the more his or her language utilizes literary art forms like Satan's epic boasting. This is not to say that poetic art is not used by unfallen characters, like the heavenly angels who use metaphor, but the fallen characters utilize it more frequently and more abundantly. Satan's character and rhetoric most of all are embedded in poetic genre. It would have been apparent to contemporary readers that Satan has the qualities of a classical epic hero, one who is "motivated like Achilles by a sense of injured merit" or possesses "wiles and craft" like Odysseus, fighting in fierce battles and embarking on an adventure to a land unknown

(Lewalski, "Genres" 113). At the beginning of the poem, Satan expresses "a range of epic passions, motives, and actions: 'pride', 'glory', 'ambitious aim', 'impious war in heaven', 'battle proud'" (Lewalski, "Genres" 118), typically the characteristics of an epic hero. He also delivers dramatic monologues like a character in an early modern play would. A seventeenth century reader familiar with these literary genres would appreciate what Satan represents as a literary character, increasing the possibility he or she will prove susceptible to Satan's influence if they do not read the poem carefully. As stated earlier, poetic language is the language of rhetoric in this epic, the method employed most by fallen characters. A corrupted language created poetry, a completely false depiction of reality or a version of reality obscured by literary devices and artful phrasing. In simpler terms, poetry is –to some extent- more closely related to evil. And if poetry is an *evil* art form, then the vehicle for which Milton delivers God's message is a corrupted one. It is the poem's Speaker, the narrative voice that frames the epic story of the Fall, who will "justify the ways of God to men" (1.26), but he uses epic language to accomplish this task.

While most critics place necessary and critical attention on the language of the epic's characters, the most important voice belongs to the Speaker because his narration relates the poem's events to the readers. However, this narration uses a fallen language and a poetic form that is the byproduct of humanity's corruption. The Speaker embraces poetic culture and continuously makes "explicit comparisons, by quotation, allusion, and parody, to the works of earlier poets." He also employs "such epic conventions as invocations... similes, catalogues, epithets, and repetitions" (Ferry, 3), all of which would be familiar and appealing to a contemporary audience. If Milton's intention is truly to educate readers on how far they are from God and remind them that closeness to God should be a desired outcome in their daily lives, then it might appear problematic that he delivers this message in the fallen style of poetry, rhetoric,

and colloquial language; that is, unless of course he has important reasons for writing in such a style.

Why did Milton embrace fallen language to praise the ways of God? Milton's audience read poetry for enjoyment; therefore they would receive his epic poem with more open arms than they would a prose treatise. The use of poetic genre, as well as colloquial and dramatic language, would have been accessible for Milton's fellow fallen man. Milton can only deliver his message in this language, not only because it is the common language or literary form that he and his readers used, but because he needs to help move his audience back up the hierarchical system in the sequential order of ascension. A fallen world cannot suddenly be moved to the style of language God uses because it is too far from God's level of being. The contrast between God and the fallen characters of the epic is important, but so is the contrast between God's language and the language of the Speaker. Milton could have created a work of literature that utilized a logical method in the same vain that he writes God. But a fallen audience is not prepared to fully understand or receive that type of message. God's use of language receives a sort of profound and lasting power by being the only use of pure logical reasoning in the poem. By framing the poem entirely in epic form, Milton can highlight the importance of God and God's unfallen language. With this in mind, this thesis aims to argue two related points about Milton's choice to present his message in the form of an epic poem. First, the poetic language serves as the ideal access point to reach a fallen audience and to begin their education in moving towards the direction of God. Second, God's purity and greatness is better highlighted when the character and his language are surrounded by a lesser language, not only from the other characters but from the poet himself. Milton needs the evil of poetry to promote the goodness of God.

II. The Extreme Distinctions of God and Satan's Language

The poem invites the reader to perceive that one of its greatest contrasts is between God's and Satan's modes of speaking. This section will examine the features of each character's language. God is a character whose language is absent of impassioned emotion and who uses words in their most original sense, such as the word "ingrate" (3.97) as Stanley Fish has previously pointed out and will be discussed in greater detail below. God is a singular being, in that he perceives all of time and space at once and that his ultimate goal is to siphon out the evil that has infected creation and return all of his created good back to himself as one connected or singular existence. This singular nature extends to his language as well and is why his words should be regarded in their most basic sense. Logic and truth guide God's language and his "personal character is established through his language which... assures conviction by virtue" (Fish, 74). Satan, on the other hand, is full of passion and uses emotionally charged overdramatic language when he speaks, such as when he addresses the other fallen angels in Books 1 and 2. He uses language artfully in order to deceive and manipulate others for his own purposes like when he positions himself as leader of the fallen in Book 2 or when he tempts Eve in Book 9. His emotional state throughout the epic varies and the erratic nature of his personality parallels his varied display of speech. The rest of the fallen angels also use dramatic or emotional rhetoric. This disparity between the speech of Heaven and hell is the first example of how the corruption of a character's being correlates with a change in language. Though there is an overabundance of scholarship written on the subject of God and Satan's language, an overview of the subjects is crucial in laying the foundation for a larger argument about the significance of God's unique language style and the greater implications it has for Milton's epic.

The poem's introduction to the character of God aptly makes it clear that he is a being of logic. His first speech reveals everything we need to know about him as a character, as it is a "fine example of logical method being applied to a universe of things" (Fish, 62). In Book 3, God reveals to the Son the fate of Adam and Adam's progeny due to Adam's upcoming fall. In detailing the events that will transpire, God asks a series of questions about Adam out loud beginning with, "Whose fault? Whose but his own?" (3.96-97). Upon first reading, and especially after being given Satan's depiction of God as a tyrant in the previous books, it is easy to interpret God's questioning as frustration and anger. However, such impassioned emotions do not rule God, and his questioning is an important component of the logical methodology that guides his thought process and discussion. God's language is contemplative and his "speech does not build" but "unfolds according to the rules of method" (Fish, 62). God poses the question of who is at fault, because the logical methodology requires "exposition" about the "item under consideration (man's position in the universe)," which leads to the questions being asked that then must be answered (Fish, 64). God continues his questioning:

Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love,
Where only what they needs must do appeared,
Not what they would? What praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When will and reason (reason also is choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,
Made passive both, had served necessity,
Not me? (3.103-111)

The questions God asks "are part of the machinery of method" (Fish, 65), a logical system of thought. When he asks whose fault?, it "is not the defensive exclamation of an angry parent disclaiming responsibility for the sins of his offspring, but a logically necessary inquiry" (Fish, 65) if God is to consider all of his created reality and the reasons his creations make the choices

they do. God is expressing events as they will unfold (or as they already are from his all-seeing, all-knowing perspective), and is making connections to uncover the reason for the Fall. He logically explains to the Son, and to the reader, that Adam and Eve would not be able to prove their loyalty if they were not free to be obedient of their own choosing. Neither they nor God would earn anything out of that relationship. Man would not be worthy of praise if his choices were dictated by the being praising him. God does not want empty loyalty, but true obedience that only comes from the freedom of choice and is not out of obligatory duty but rather for love of God. It would be difficult to doubt or argue God's words here. As mentioned earlier, logical speech follows a method of inquiry with the goal of knowing the whole truth of a subject. If the reader understands God's words to be coming from a place of calm, contemplative thought, and not anger, then everything God says in his first speech appears to follow a logical and sensible reasoning that invites any who hear the words to know it to be truth. God simply proves that Adam is at fault for his own downfall and he states it as fact after coming to his conclusion.

Reason rules God's language, and due to the logical manner in which he explains any subject, it becomes difficult to dispute his innocence in the events that cause the fall of man. Even though God knows the fall of man will transpire, he uses sound logic to explain why his foreknowledge has no bearing on their choice, "as if predestination overruled / their will" (3.114-15) because "they themselves decreed / their own revolt, not I" (3.116-17). He adds, "If I foreknew, / foreknowledge had no influence on their fault" (3.117-18) because "I formed them free and free they must remain" (3.124). Again, he provides a reasonable response to potential criticism of his ways, stating that Adam and Eve would not be free if he altered the outcome of their decision freely made. It is in God's very nature to be completely ruled by pure reason, placing him at the top of the hierarchical system of beings.

Because of his logical and reasoning nature, God's language is absent of excessive emotion or passion. When he first sees Satan making his way to Earth, he notes the fallen angel and says to the Son, "seest thou what rage / transports our adversary" (3.80-81), "so bent he seems / on desperate revenge that shall redound / upon his own rebellious head" (3.84-86). This is not an excited or emotional response, or even a threat, but a simple fact as God sees all of time simultaneously, and acknowledges Satan's future of continual punishment as if it were a present occurrence. God casually regards Satan as "an object of interest or amusement rather than fear" (Fish, 78).

Another notable aspect of God's language is that he uses words in their most basic and original sense. His language is a pure, singular language that is free from confused meanings or double entendre. To better understand the nature of God's singular language, God's existence as a singular being must be taken under consideration. God's status as a singular being is made evident with his introduction. In Book 3, it is apparent from God's discussion with the Son that he perceives time and space all at once, an "eternal present" (Fish, 78), when he describes his own foreknowledge. Shortly after this description, God divulges to the Son his grand desire for all of creation. As God describes the biblical prophecy of Revelations, he proclaims that after all of the "bad men and angels" (3.331) are judged, "hell, her numbers full, / thenceforth shall be forever shut" (3.332-33), closing off all of the evil in God's universe from the rest of God's creation completely and permanently. He continues, "the world shall burn and from her ashes spring / new Heaven and earth wherein the just shall dwell" (3.334-35). The connection between God and man will be strengthened, allowing for a renewed and more direct relationship between the two, just as it was before Adam sinned. God desires this direct linkage between himself and all of his inherently good creations. This prophetic statement he shares with the Son in front of

the Heavenly host reveals his ultimate goal of not only redeeming humanity for the sins of their progenitor, but to absolutely remove evil and rejoin the separate parts of his created universe as one. Both God's drive towards a connected singular universe and his singular vision of seeing all events of time and space simultaneously coincides with God's singular and pure language.

God's language reflects his very nature. Unlike the fallen characters of the epic, God uses words in their conventionally-understood most original usage or definition and he never uses clever double-speak. His speech is not as dramatic or poetic as that of a character like Satan because "poetry is human and metaphorical, and the Father's speeches intend to express divine Justice as if directly : to seem without seeming : to create the illusion of no illusion" (Fish, 59). God only sees things "in their essential natures... God in his own voice can never speak metaphorically" (Fish, 59) because that would mean God's perception was corrupted by inessential pretense. Understanding this interpretation of God's perception and speech allows the hearer or reader to consider what God actually means and feels when he uses certain words. For example, when God discusses Adam's fault in the Fall, he refers to Adam as an "ingrate" (3.97), but it "is a term not of reproach, but of definition" because "the names God imposes reflect the accuracy of his perception rather than his attitude toward the object named" (Fish, 64). He speaks in "a language free of 'synonymous words,' 'Equivocals,' words of 'several significations,' and of metaphors, those 'affected ornaments' which prejudice the native simplicity of speech and contribute to the disguising of it with false appearances" (Fish, 64-65). God's words are truth; therefore ingrate "is not a judgment, but a scientific notation" with no emotional value (Fish, 65).

Milton's Satan functions as the exact opposite of God because he is a being of pathos that relies on rhetorical persuasion to make his point. As he commits more sinful thoughts and actions

he moves further away from God and that singular, pure nature that defines a good-natured being that is connected to God. In Book 5, Raphael relates to Adam, “that thou art happy, owe to God; / That thou continu’st such, owe to thyself, / that is, to thy obedience; therein stand. (5.520-22). Everything one needs, including life, comes from God and the only thing one needs to do to continue receiving God’s gifts is show gratitude by being obedient. Not content with just being obedient, Satan is the first of God’s creations in the poem to turn away from God. Satan is filled “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” (5.661-65). These impure and sinful thoughts corrupt Satan’s very nature which extends to the corruption of his language as well. Satan engineers a rebellion against God, but does so using dishonest and impassioned rhetoric intended to invoke similar sinful passions out of his angelic peers. When Satan assembles the congregation to spur on his rebellion, he is pretending to “consult / about the great reception of their king” (5.768-69), the Son, “and with calumnious art / of counterfeited truth thus held” (5.770-71) the ears of a third of the other angels. Satan uses lies and guile to capture the attention of his audience because unlike God he has no facts to support a logical reasoning for his claims, only emotional appeals.

Even after the fallen angels lose the war in Heaven, Satan continues such rhetorical tactics and his speech becomes more artful and dramatic. He uses manipulative language to assume his reign in hell, claiming “Me though just right and the fixed laws of Heaven / did first create your leader, next, free choice, / with what besides, in counsel or in fight, / hath achieved of his merit” (2.18-21). He claims his authority in an incoherent manner to assert his rule, and manages to cover every reason for his worthiness to rule, some of which he claimed were the reasons God should not reign, such as the right to rule his equals. On several occasions in the

epic, Satan's arguments against God appear "faulty in [their] conclusions" (Leonard, Naming, 60). Satan follows up his incoherent argument by referring to his seat as an "unenvied throne / yielded with full consent" (2.23-24) and asks, "who will envy whom the highest place exposes / foremost to stand against the thunderer's aim" (2.27-28). Satan uses artful language to get what he wants and is appealing to the other fallen angels' fear of God. He never gives a chance for dissent and makes these arguments so his rule in Hell goes unchallenged. He uses the art of wordplay to get what he wants from his fellow fallen angels once more when he asks who will volunteer to go to Eden, "who shall tempt with wandering feet / the dark unbottomed infinite abyss" (2.404-05)... "What strength, what art, can then / suffice or what evasion bear him safe / through strict sentries and stations thick / of angels watching round?" (2.410-13). Satan again invokes fear by phrasing his intent as a seemingly honest question. As expected, the other fallen angels stayed quiet, "pondering the danger with deep thoughts" (2.421). This gives Satan the opportunity to volunteer himself, solidifying his self-appointed position as leader of the fallen. Unlike God's use of logos, Satan relies heavily on pathos and continues to use a language rooted in manipulation and deceit to fulfil his agenda throughout the rest of the epic. The artful, manipulative language Satan possesses is much more complex than God's singular language. But that complexity is not an advantageous adaptation because it is the result of confusion. Satan's thoughts, his very being, are impure and corrupted. The simplicity of God's language represents harmony and clarity. Satan speaks in "fallacies" that have "false beginnings, faulty pronoun references, missing verbs and verbal schemes which sacrifice sense to sound" (Fish, 74).

Whenever Satan addresses his compatriots, he tries to appeal to them with pretty language and flattery, always titling them as "powers and dominions" (2.11) or "thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers" (5.772) throughout the epic. Satan uses this appealing

language to address or deceive others throughout the epic. Once Satan learns that Sin and Death are his offspring, his previously combative words become “milder” and “smooth” (2.816). Sin is now called “dear daughter” (2.817) and Death is “fair son” (2.818), when just a few lines earlier Satan refers to Sin as a “thing” (2.741) and calls Death an “execrable shape” (2.681) that is “grim and terrible” (2.682) with a “miscreated front” (2.683), adding that he has never “seen a sight more detestable” (2.745) than the two of them. After Satan changes his tone, he tells Sin and Death that he has come “to set free / from out this dark and dismal house of pain” (2.822-23). The reader knows this to be a lie since Satan did not even recognize his “dear detestable” daughter or know of his “fair miscreated” son’s existence at the beginning of this encounter. When he meets Chaos and Night, he attempts to placate them “by appealing to their self-interest” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 138) claiming that if they help him in his rebellion against God that “yours be the advantage all, mine the revenge” (2.987). Satan also attempts to appeal to Eve with poetic language when he addresses her with flattering titles such as “O sacred wise, and wisdom-giving plant, / mother of science” (9.679-80) or “Queen of this universe” (9.684). Throughout the poem, Satan’s fills his speech with such artful rhetoric to direct at an audience in order to get what he wants.

The fallen angels rely entirely on rhetorical practices and none of God’s method for logical reasoning. They use the epic poetic dialogue that includes “challenges, taunts, consultations on battle tactics—which are transformed by rhetorical pressures or deformed by malevolent irony,” a common trait of the classical epic (Lewalski, *PL/Rhetoric*, 80). Their language emulates the language of Milton’s readers (contemporary and modern), as well as the language of highly regarded literary characters. The rebel angels “do not exchange views, or explore a topic together, or pursue truth through some process of dialectic” in a similar way God

will logically come to understand a subject, but instead their “dialogue usually takes on the character of manipulative rhetoric” (Lewalski, *PL/Rhetoric*, 80).

Satan is capable of emulating the logical method, but it is not truly logical speech since it is tainted by lies and used for selfish purposes rather than to reveal truths. His temptation of Eve in Book 9 does include a logical rhetorical argument, but he frames his words in pretense and deception. Satan, disguised as the serpent, asks, “Knowledge of good and evil? / Of good, how just? Of evil, if what is evil / be real, why not known, since easier shunned?” (9.697-99). Satan wonders how any being can refuse or combat evil if that being does not know what evil is. He is suggesting that if Eve acquires the knowledge of evil along with good, she will be better equipped to recognize evil and ensure she does not choose it over good. This argument has merits, yet he makes it while disguised in a form not his own and is actually trying to convince her to commit the evil of sin. Aside from his physical disguise, Satan also lies in his argument when he acts ignorant of death by saying “whatever thing death be” (9.695), since, as the reader well knows, he meets the embodiment of Death in Book 2. Satan not only relies on pathos, but manipulates logos through pathos to achieve his desired response from his audience.

When the reader captures Satan alone, he or she witnesses that his speech, though still full of passion, reveals the unstable emotional nature of his character. In Book 4, when Satan first enters Eden, he thinks out loud on his current state and is full of “inner debate and self-criticism” (Carey 163). Satan displays despair, lamenting “from what state / [he] fell” (4.38-39), admitting that his own “pride and worse ambition” (4.40) caused his fall from heavenly grace. He also admits that God did not deserve to be rebelled against, yet decides he cannot repent for “his dread of shame / among the spirits beneath, whom I seduced” (4.82-83) and because he would never be truly content subservient to God. Satan’s emotions in this soliloquy are erratic as

“he vacillates between remorse and defiance” (Carey, 163). He acknowledges his wrongdoing and feels miserable in his fallen state, yet he decides he is too prideful for reconciliation with God and embraces evil.

The corruption of Satan’s mind and language also correlates with the corruption of his identity, both physically and nominally. When Milton first introduces Satan and the fallen angels to the reader, it appears the fallen characters do not fully recognize each other. This is evident when Satan first sees Beelzebub and says, “If thou beest he—but O how fallen! How changed / from him, who in the happy realms of light / clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine / myriads though bright” (1.84-87). Once Milton, in the later books, introduces purer characters to contrast against the fallen angels, it becomes apparent that these changed appearances are tied to the change of their inward state. They both physically and spiritually fall, changing their status in the hierarchy and altering their appearance and use of language. In Book 4, Satan himself attests to his own inward corruption when he laments “how glorious once above thy sphere, / ‘till pride and worse ambition threw me down” (4.39-40). He acknowledges the character flaws of his nature. The fall into hell changed the physical appearance of the rebel angels to match their corrupted interiors. Their names are not even the names they were known by when they resided in Heaven, such as Beelzebub who was only “long after known in Palestine” (1.80) by that name, or even “Satan, so call him now; his former name / is heard no more in Heaven” (5.658-59). When a being has his or her status lowered in the universal hierarchy, he or she does not only lose a sense of God’s pure language, but of innate knowledge associated with it such as the true names of everyone and everything including himself. To the fallen reader, “the fallen angels bear the names of devils or pagan gods, not angels” (Leonard, Naming, 67), the original names are never pronounced. The rebel angels “either address each other by titles or else find some other

circumlocution” (Leonard, Naming, 79). The loss of the fallen angels’ ability to properly name each other or themselves reflects a significant loss in their own speech as a result of their fall and “these new names can never fit the angels’ natures as their old ones had done” (Leonard, Naming, 69). Satan is only referred to his original name, Lucifer, three times in the epic, and each time it is not a fallen angel who uses the name but a heavenly angel or the Speaker who is illuminated with inspiration to relate God’s purpose (5.760, 7.131, and 10.425). Just as Satan’s passions dictate his use of language, the emotion of fear further corrupts the fallen angels’ ability to properly name God. Satan and the other rebels seem “reluctant to speak of ‘God’ in Paradise Lost” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 139), and instead refer to God as “our supreme foe” (2.210), the “almighty” (1.259), or several times as “a singular pronoun” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 140) such as ‘he’ or ‘him’. Their fear of God influences their improper naming of him, further showcasing their fallen state and accompanying indirect language.

Satan and his army find themselves placed at the very bottom of the hierarchy and their language sounds the most extreme from God’s. Their speech and inward characters are similar to the speech and behavior of fallen man. The reader can identify with the passions expressed by Satan, and can appreciate the dramatic and poetic manner in which he delivers his speech. But in order to comprehend God’s unique status, he must be compared to the other beings in the poem, including unfallen characters. It is obvious that the fallen angels would appear different from God, but the characters who have not fallen still do not meet the pure logical standard represented by God. It is through Heaven’s angels and unfallen man that the reader can see just how unique God is when even those closer to him still show hints of the potential to fall.

III. Ungodly, Yet Unfallen Language

The language of the unfallen angels and unfallen man is nothing like that of the fallen angels, but their speech is not as pure as God's. Though they do not use maliciously deceptive language, they do speak poetically, using devices that the fallen reader would recognize as literary art. The use of this poetic or creative language reveals these characters are not as pure as the God who created them and that they are never far from the possibility of falling and lowering their state in the hierarchy of beings. Much like God, the angels of Heaven speak in truths; however, their language can be much more literary rather than literal so the truth they speak is at times filtered through a less than true delivery system. In Book 6, before striking Satan Abdiel boasts, "This greeting on thy impious crest receive" (6.188). This is a clever use of the word *greeting* because it is a play on the word as "a noble stroke" (6.189) "on the proud crest of Satan" (6.191) is hardly a friendly salute. While Abdiel's use of the word is not quite a lie, it is not truthful in the original sense of the word.

Abdiel also uses a dramatic soliloquy in Book 6 from lines 114-26 much like Satan previously does earlier in the epic. This dramatic use of language significantly differs from Satan's use of it because comes not from a place of vain emotional turmoil but from reason. Abdiel is not trying to persuade an audience, not the reader nor himself, but is stating the truth of his current circumstance. When he thinks on the fight ahead as well as his past debate with Satan and says, "I mean to try, whose reason I have tried / unsound and false; nor is it aught but just / that he who in debate of truth hath won / should win in arms" (6.120-23), he is somewhat emulating the epic language of boasting before and during battle, though his boasting is not for vanity or love of war but to highlight God's justice as well sound reasoning and its relation to physical strength (Lewalski, *PL/Rhetoric*, 159). He does not praise war and instead refers to it as

“brutish” and “foul” (6.124). Satan as a skilled rhetorician is constantly trying to persuade others (and himself) of his cause, but Abdiel’s challenging of Satan on the battlefield is not “to convince but to convict” Satan for his crimes against the Almighty (Lewalski, *PL/Rhetoric*, 159). Abdiel’s soliloquy is the only one in the epic spoken by an unfallen angel, but he “uses it properly, to work out from true principles the action he should take the results likely to follow from it” (Lewalski, *PL/Rhetoric*, 334). The angels occasionally exhibit epic poetic and dramatic language throughout the poem, but because they remain true to God, and therefore unfallen from their place in the hierarchy, their language only flirts with corruption. This quirk in their language that allows the truth of their words to be somewhat obscured by creative speech reveals that they are not as pure as God and that they are capable of falling.

The heavenly angels are not the only beings whose language reflects a strange middle between God and hell. Unfallen humanity also speaks with a barely-tainted innocence. The language of man is pure and honest like the characters who reside in Heaven, but just like the angels, humans exhibit minor flaws in their thoughts and language. Humanity’s pre-fallen purity is evident in the innate knowledge associated with man’s language. When Adam recounts his earliest memories, he says to Raphael, “to speak I tried and forthwith spake; / my tongue obeyed and readily could name / whate’er I saw” (8.271-73). From the moment of his creation, Adam is not only able to speak but can properly name everything around him including the sun, the objects that make up his landscape, and all other creatures. Unlike fallen humanity, “Adam has no need to acquire language laboriously” because his language is “natural, not conventional” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 130). Adam “recognizes the inherent appropriateness of a certain name to a certain creature” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 131) or thing, an ability that has been granted to him by God. Because of pre-fallen humanity’s closeness to God,

man possesses an internal knowledge that is reflected through a language that recognizes and labels everything in its original and singular meaning. It “testifies to the completeness of [man’s] understanding” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 131) and this language of innate knowledge, a “perfect wisdom” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 133), is tied to God’s singular nature and orderly universe.

Much like God and the unfallen angels, the unfallen language of humanity uses words in their most original meaning. At one point in the epic, Pre-fallen Adam uses the word “Absolved” (7.94). Milton’s seventeenth century readers, as well as readers today, would recognize this word’s association with the forgiveness of sins, yet thus far in Eden there has been no sin. The reader must consider that “before sin was, *absolution* was no more than completion” or finished. Milton intentionally uses “words in their original, Latin sense” to take “us back to a time when there were no infected words because there were no infected actions” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 135). The absence of sin also influences the language of man.

Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve’s prayer ritual is conducted much differently than what the fallen world recognizes as praying. In Book 5, Adam and Eve begin their day with “orisons, each morning duly paid / in various style” (5.145-46). The speaker explains that “neither various style / nor holy rapture wanted they to praise / their maker in fit strains pronounced or sung / unmediated” (5.146-49). In this unfallen world, praying is original and sincere, leading to Adam and Eve praying in whatever manner came to mind. The individual’s connection with God was much stronger and did not need a set ritual to guide their worshipful thoughts.

Adam’s use of language is much more humble than the fallen language of Satan. When Adam asks Raphael in Book 7 to relate the history and reasoning for God’s creation of the universe, he does so in a “daring and humble” manner; freeing his speech from any aggressive

“curiosity while asserting a bold spirit of enquiry” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 137). Though Adam uses the word “ask” (7.95), he follows his request with his reasoned desire “to magnify his works” (7.97). His request comes from a place of humble appreciation for his creator, “a wondering celebration of the magnificence of God’s works” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 137-38). This is different from Satan’s approach to asking for information. Whereas “Adam asserts his will by setting limits to it, Satan is tactlessly blunt” in his placating of Chaos and Night (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 138). Adam’s humility is also present in his speech whenever he speaks to God. When Adam first meets God, he humbly inquires to know the identity of the heavenly creator, but adds that his reason for wanting to know is so that he may “adore... [the] the author of this universe” (8.360). This introduction leads to an exchange between Adam and God, where Adam replies with “humble deprecation” (8.378) or answers “lowly” (8.412). Adam’s words affirm that he knows his place subservient to God. When God first questions Adam’s feelings of solitude, Adam humbly says, “Let not my words offend thee” (8.379). Adam’s language reflects an innocent and reverent state that, despite “all human thoughts [coming up] short” (8.414) compared to God’s knowledge, can engage in a logical discourse with God. It is important to note that Adam cannot initially name God. Though Adam has not yet fallen, since God is “above mankind or aught than mankind higher” (8.358) and therefore beyond him, Adam cannot possess innate knowledge of God. God must instruct Adam of such wisdom because even unfallen Adam resides in a much lowlier state than God, at a lower placement in the hierarchy of beings.

Despite the innocence and purity present in the language spoken by Adam and Eve, they do make attempts at bending the truth in their language to assert their own purposes, although these attempts are not as masterful or malicious as Satan’s. When Adam and Eve tend to their

gardening duties in Book 9, they begin to debate each other in a manner guided more by emotion than reason. After Adam first refuses to let Eve go off on her own, she responds “as one who loves and some unkindness meets” (9.271) and has “a sweet austere composure” (9.272), or in other words, she is doing her best (and failing) to express a face that shows no anger and is about to become passive-aggressive. After reciting her knowledge of the threat of Satan, she finishes her response with saying Adam “misthought of her to [him] so dear” (9.289). She completely transforms the discussion into one about Adam misjudging or mistreating her from one about Satan’s infiltration of Eden. This is a tactic meant to appeal to Adam’s emotions, particularly fear of hurting Eve’s feelings or fear of an upset wife. Adam counters this with his own attempt at pathos and replies “with healing words” (9.290). After laying out his own sound reasoning, he attempts a similar tactic as Eve by first stating to her that “from the influence of thy looks [I] receive / access in every virtue, in thy sight / more wise, more watchful, stronger” (9.309-311) and then asks, “Why shouldst not thou like sense within thee feel / when I am present, and thy trial choose / with me, best witness of thy virtue tried?” (9.315-17). Adam attempts to compliment her by describing how her presence makes his defense against sinful temptation stronger. He designs his questions with the hope that she will say she feels the same in an attempt to not upset him. Except unlike Adam, Eve does respond “with healing words” but with another counter-argument that Adam rebuts with another one of his own. This final argument of Adam’s ends with his ignoring of everything he just said and he dismissively gives Eve permission to leave. After explaining why Eve should stay, Adam says, “if thou think trial unsought may find / us both securer than thus warned thou seem’st / go” (9.370-72). Throughout the debate, Adam and Eve both attempt to persuade the other by presenting themselves as offended or emotionally wounded. They each hope the other would not want to hurt the feelings

of his or her spouse. If this pattern stays consistent, it is possible Adam is attempting a sort of reverse psychology when he tells Eve to go freely. This tactic that both characters employ is similar to the manipulation Satan uses, but not exactly the same since Adam and Eve each makes an argument based on reason and truth. Adam and Eve are not overtly manipulating each other, but their language expresses an underlying cleverness that has yet to reveal itself. They are still sinless and close to God, therefore their language style leans more towards his direction of the hierarchy of beings; however, this attempt at clever debating offers a glimpse of their potential as fallen beings and the direction that their style of speech could head towards.

IV. Fallen Man

Once Adam and Eve fall, there is a complete change in their language. Whereas originally emotions may have slightly mingled with their reasoned innocence, passion rules their fallen speech. They begin to master the cleverness that previously escapes them and they even become capable of lying. Like Satan, their language becomes more complex, possessing double meanings and poetic devices. Their inward natures have changed, likening them to Satan and the other fallen angels. Language that is artful, dramatic, and poetic is tied to the fall of Adam and Eve. It was Satan's language and skill as a rhetorician that led to Eve's consumption of the fruit, just as Adam's own fall occurs not when he eats the fruit, but during his dramatic soliloquy where "first to himself he inward silence broke" (9.895). Adam "shows no sign of believing Eve's claim to have acquired knowledge from the fruit" (Leonard, Naming, 213), instead lamenting her sin and wondering how Eve could have "yielded to transgress / the strict forbiddance" (9. 902-03). It is not her language that persuades him to fall, but his own. During this impassioned, dramatic speech Adam declares "and me with thee hath ruined, for with thee / certain my resolution is to die. / How can I live without thee" (9.906-908). This is when Adam truly falls because "it is in the soliloquy that he decides to fall" (Leonard, Naming, 213). Dramatic and impassioned rhetoric is the window into humanity's fall that leads to the break down into a much more complex language.

After the Fall, Adam and Eve begin to use language to deceive and lie. When Eve first approaches Adam with the fruit, nearly everything she says is deceptive language, such as, "Thee I have missed and thought it long, deprived / thy presence" (9.857-58), or claiming the tree was "of divine effect / to open eyes and make them gods who taste" (9.865-66), or even when she tells Adam "thee / chiefly I sought" (9.877-78) so he "may join us, equal joy as equal love"

(9.881). The reader knows this to be false because it is only a few lines earlier that Eve questions whether or not to offer Adam the same perceived elevation that comes with eating of the fruit. She asks herself if she should share this knowledge with Adam “or rather not / but keep the odds of knowledge in my power / without copartner” (9.819-21). She claims she could be “more equal” (9.823) or “superior” (9.825). It is not until she considers that God might have witnessed her transgression and death awaits her that she brings the fruit to Adam. She imagines Adam “wedded to another Eve” (9.828) and fearful of this decides that “Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe” (9.831). Eve’s chief desire was not to share equal status with Adam. She considers keeping the power she believes she’s acquired for herself until she fears dying alone. In her new corrupted nature, Eve returns to Adam with lies and attempts to deceive.

Once the inner nature of humanity is corrupted, so is human language along with it. Adam and Eve’s speech begins to break down from God’s singular ideal and becomes more complex. Words lose a singular meaning, confusing the organized structure originally set in place. This break down and confusion of language is due to “one consequence of the Fall” being “the loss of [the] ability to name things rightly” (Leonard, “Language and Knowledge” 133). This is evident when Adam refers to the serpent, named as such up until the Fall has occurred, as “that false worm” (9.1068). For Milton’s contemporary readers, worm would have been a known alternative word for serpent or adder, but those readers exist in a fallen world. In pre-fallen Eden, the animal was only known as the serpent before this moment. Adam’s fallen state creates a confusion of language that seems creative and bountiful to a contemporary fallen world, but is actually a deterioration of God’s perfection.

Much Like Satan and the other fallen angels, Adam and Eve’s fall and change in language is accompanied by a change in their physical beings into a lesser state, thus showing

their new complex language is a result of corruption rather than elevation. Adam and Eve are now mortal, a lesser state in itself, but there are other changes that accompany their mortality. Eve points out that their daily labor will be more difficult now, claiming that “labor calls us now with sweat imposed” (11.172). As the angel Michael relates to Adam what is to come for Adam’s progeny, he is first able to show Adam visions of the future; however, as Adam’s status is deteriorating into a lower being and by the beginning of Book 12, Michael perceives that Adam’s “mortal sight to fail: objects divine / must needs impair and weary human sense” (12.9-10). Adam’s mortal eyes can no longer witness heavenly power because it has fallen too far from God. The rest of Michael’s prophecy must be related verbally to Adam.

The fallen state of Adam and Eve is not unlike the character of Satan; however, they do not fall quite as low as he. Their language may deteriorate into sharing the same qualities as Satan’s, but it is in their response to falling that the two sets of characters differ. Satan never repents or learns from his fall and he continues to sin against God. Adam and Eve eventually recognize their fault and Adam suggests they seek God’s pity. He advises Eve and says, “If we pray him, will his ear / be open and his heart to pity incline” (10.1060-61). They can ask God to instruct them how to survive their new and fallen world. Adam does not demand a return to their former status, but is humbled and wants to continue to serve God in this new tragic placement. He continues, “prostrate fall / before him reverent, and there confess / humbly our faults and pardon beg” (10.1087-89). In seeking sincere forgiveness, Adam exhibits a potential that the fallen Satan does not seem to possess; that is, the potential to move back up the hierarchy. This scene also shows how the purpose and method of prayer has been altered in a fallen state. Whereas before the Fall praying was conducted with various methods of praising creation and God, this new prayer is the beginning of man’s method for seeking penance from God.

V. The Poem's Language

Through language, the characters that surround God highlight his unique status, but the characters are the extension of a larger piece of language: the poem itself. To understand the purity of God, the reader needs to go beyond comparing or contrasting him with the other characters and needs to analyze his language within the words of the speaker and the genre of the delivery system for those words. The epic poem, like any other literary genre, is the product of a fallen world and language. It is art and therefore lies even when it attempts to depict truth. Milton's God exists in a world constructed out of falsity that utilizes the poetic characteristics of the epic as well as some other literary forms.

In a literary work that aims to glorify God's ways and promote the idea that we should move in a direction towards the ideals of God, it is significant that the work is delivered to an audience through the artificialness of poetry. Poetic genres must follow particular patterns and are bound by certain conventional obligations; the opposite of the various spontaneity practiced by unfallen Adam and Eve when they pray. Literary devices and themes mask or obscure the truth in an author's message. *Paradise Lost* is an epic poem and follows the format required to fulfil such a type of work. Like the classical epics of Homer and Virgil, Milton's epic is structured in a manner that fulfills the tropes of the epic genre: The poem begins in *media res*, there are the Speaker's three invocations of the muse, the cataloguing in Book 1 of Satan's army and each soldier's history, a boastful character –Satan- who wages war over wounded pride, the depiction of a great battle, simile and metaphor, etc. The poem also has elements that “derive from romantic epics” such as the “Spenserian allegorical characters” (Lewalski, “Genres” 113) Sin, Death, Chaos, and Night. Milton's original plan for his depiction of the Fall was to do so in the form of a play and “many dramatic elements” from that scrapped plan find their way into the

epic, such as “the tragic soliloquys of Satan and Adam”(Lewalski, “Genres” 114) which add to the poetic genre of the work. The “eclogue-like passages” that describe Heaven and Eden give the epic elements of pastoral poetry (Lewalski, “Genres” 114). Milton could have only utilized the conventions of the Homeric or Virgilian epic, but chooses to fill his poem with several aspects of poetic genre popular with his contemporary audience. Doing so serves his purposes on two fronts. At the most basic level, it creates a true work of literary art that would have been appreciated and enjoyed by a larger audience, but on a deeper level, it surrounds the unpoetic language of Milton’s God with most known genres of poetry. The genres are not only the delivery device to construct beautiful poetry, they are tools meant to further separate God from the familiar and more pleasing language. If *Paradise Lost* is interpreted correctly, that is, if the reader understands that God is just and his language captures a state of being we should aspire to emulate, then the poetic genre, the language of the poem itself, is meant to highlight its own fallen nature, to condemn itself as an evil byproduct of the Fall as well as create a beautiful work of art that a fallen audience can enjoy.

The poem itself, including all of its literary attributes and all of its characters, is narrated by a Speaker and this “narrative voice is as deliberate an invention as the other characters in the poem and essential to its meaning” (Ferry, 20). The Speaker’s language is the most important of all because he is the one who relates the story of the Fall to the reader and he is the one who is framing the truth. The Speaker represents Milton’s intent as a poet and as Christian delivering a message in the service of God. It is easy to lose sight of the Speaker’s importance because the drama of the characters are “acted out immediately before us like scenes in a play” and are usually very human and relatable, making them more appealing to the reader (Ferry,14). Though the play possesses the qualities of other genres it is still very much an epic poem, “and although

an epic may have dramatic qualities, there are inescapable differences between the two genres” (Ferry, 14), most notably that it is the Speaker who narrates truth and not the characters. When Milton’s Speaker declares that he will “justify the ways of God to men,” that is in fact his intention and the reader is “meant to take these lines seriously” (Ferry, 8). In the epic genre, the speaker is a voice that only relates the events of the story and therefore his perspective is truth.

But the Speaker’s voice is the poem and even though he speaks the truth, he does so through a corrupted filter of art-truth. The Speaker often uses metaphor throughout the epic, for example in Book 3, he describes himself as a bird “with bolder wing” (3.13) “as the wakeful bird / sings darkling and, in shadiest covert hid, / tunes her nocturnal note” (3.38-40). Metaphor allows the Speaker to fulfil the convention of epic, but it reveals that he is as fallen as his audience. Though it lends itself to the poetry, the Speaker is not a bird but a man and so his words are false. Ironically, the speaker uses poetic language such as “the language of analogy when he uses similes to contrast the world of his own experience with the unfallen world of his poem” (Ferry, 88). Simile and metaphor are used because his fallen mind cannot comprehend the pure setting of Heaven or pre-fallen Earth. Just as Adam cannot name a higher being like God on his own, the Speaker cannot simply state the setting of Heaven and Eden or state straightforward descriptions of God and the angels. The speaker only uses “a language of statement when he makes didactic comments interpreting his argument” (Ferry, 88) because his mind can comprehend his very human purpose.

To ensure that readers recognize God as the zenith of purity and the top of the hierarchy, Milton needs his Speaker to be a fallen man that uses a fallen dialect. Milton could just have easily had his narrating voice deliver his message in the same logical and reasoned tone as God. But then God would not be uniquely situated. God’s speech is the only aspect of the poem that is

absent of poetry. All the other words, be it dialogue from other characters, the narration of the speaker, or his poetic devices, surround God with recognizable fallen language. The nature of the work itself is fallen and God stands out as an unobtainable achievement of goodness. Milton needs the evil of poetry to highlight this fact. Poetry is how he gains access to his fallen audience and how he keeps his interest since most “will not so much as look upon truth herself, unless they see her elegantly dressed” (Ferry, 9). He then uses poetry against itself to reveal a more important form of language. Much like how “Adam fell of knowing good and evil; that is to say, of knowing good by evil” (Milton, 247), Milton helps his audience to understand the truth of goodness by delivering it through evil. This is the truth articulated in the poem that Adam comes to understand in Book 12 when he exclaims, “O goodness infinite, goodness immense! / that all this good of evil shall produce / and evil turn to good” (12.469-71). By the end of the epic, both Adam and Eve understand and recognize that “the true Eden [is] within the soul” and that “without the Fall there would have been no occasion to demonstrate divine love in the redemption, so without the knowledge of evil that sin brought to Adam and Eve, they would never have learned the nature of good” (Ferry, 39).

Milton needs the evil of poetry to highlight God’s goodness and justify God’s ways to a fallen audience. Much like the characters of the poem can be understood by ordering them into a hierarchical structure, understanding the poem and God’s uniqueness can be understood by ordering the poem itself into a hierarchical structure and working your way up through that ordered system. First, the poem can be analyzed at the level of characters. Satan’s language is rhetorical and human in nature whereas God’s is logical and emotionless. An examination of the language of the angels and unfallen humans is the next step up in the hierarchy of understanding, as they provide insight into the truth that even those beings more closely connected to God are

not near God's status and are much closer to becoming one of the fallen, a fact exemplified by Adam and Eve's fall. Finally, the reader must have an understanding of the epic genre, as well as the other poetic forms present in the poem, which will aid them in understanding the Speaker. The Speaker is using poetry, a fallen art form, to promote God. If even he cannot access the higher language used by God, then God truly is exclusively good. In the poem, God's language is surrounded on all fronts by fallen language. It exists in world of poetry narrated by a fallen speaker and interacts with characters who also speak with a fallen speech. After the reader has been surprised by sin, as Fish phrases it, and learns his or her lesson to not trust Satan and to love God, he or she can become aware of God's exceptional character to gain an even greater understanding of just how fallen humanity truly is. The fallen reader will never obtain God's status, but can work towards living a life that points in his direction.

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