

Aristotelian *Poetics* in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Satan's Apobaterion in a Fallen Chronopoetics

『失楽園』における Satan の Apobaterion：墮落の時間詩学と修辞学

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Abstract

Paradise Lost (1667)¹⁾ by John Milton (1608–1674) emerges as a theologically inflected epic wherein classical poetics, sacred temporality, and rhetorical artifice coalesce to dramatize the corruption and potential redemption of moral agency. At the heart of this theodical narrative lies a trenchant repudiation of sophistry, manifest in Satan's deliberate subversion of Aristotelian modes of persuasion—*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*—which he weaponizes not to disclose, but to occlude the verity of God. Milton employs the Aristotelian tragic structure—*hamartia*, *peripeteia*, *anagnorisis*, and *catharsis*—not as mere formal apparatus but as a theological grammar through which the moral arc of humanity is inscribed.

Milton's earlier compositions, notably "On Time" (1631–33) anticipate this polemical posture by repudiating scholastic pedantry and embracing a poetic vocation divinely ordained and attuned to *kairos*—the providential moment of truth's irruption. As Milton affirms in *Prolusions* (1620s), the distinction between *kairos* and *chronos* in *PL* becomes architectonic: Satan manipulates chronological time to engender epistemic obfuscation, deferring moral recognition and distorting causal coherence. His rhetoric disfigures free will, inducing Eve to transgress under the illusion of autonomy.

In antithesis, sacred utterance—whether angelic oracle or the Son's redemptive

proclamation—operates within *kairotic* temporality, wherein speech coincides with truth and discloses eternal purpose. Through this dialectic, Milton reconfigures classical tragedy as a theological cosmology, wherein properly oriented rhetoric comes to be an instrument of illumination. Thus, *PL* represents a radical transmutation of Aristotelian *Poetics*: a sublime fusion of rhetoric and metaphysics whereby sophistic decay is superseded by *kairotic* disclosure, and the epic form is reoriented toward the crucible of moral and spiritual discernment.

Keywords: *Aristotle, Rhetoric, Poetics, Satan, Chronos and Kairos*

1. Introduction

Aristotle, in his *Poetics* (*Περὶ ποιητικῆς*, 335 BCE), draws attention to the poet's unique insight and creative prowess, which arises from the verb *ποιέω* (to make, to create), from which the term *ποιητής* (poet) is derived. He defines the poet's work as follows:

[A] poet's object is not to tell what actually happened but what could and would happen either probably or inevitably. . . . The real difference is this, that one tells what happened and the other what might happen. For this reason, poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts. (1451a–b)

The distinction between historians and poets does not reside in their use of verse. As epitomized by the sacred dimension of Orpheus's music, which Milton ardently extolled in his pieces, the defining element that generates profound gravitas is the poet's immortal insight as a prophet. This is none other than the exceptional faculty uniquely belonging to the poet. In this context, as expounded by Oka Michio, history comprises an array of events and is not necessarily constituted solely by human actions; it encompasses phenomena devoid of a causal nexus, such as natural

calamities (Aristotle, *Poetics* [Oka] 149). Therefore, history does not seek to elucidate events through causality (*διὰ τὰδε*), but rather adopts a chronicle-like form that merely enumerates occurrences in their temporal succession (*μετὰ τὰδε*).

In contrast, poetry is a representation of action (*mimesis*), wherein the poet constructs a narrative (*μῦθος*) by discerning causal relationships among events, thus enabling the portrayal of universal verities. Consequently, the poet is endowed with the unique ability to imbue events with meaning through the possible—a realm beyond the historian's purview. To give an instance, Milton's mimetic poetic enterprise, across genres and registers, is predicated upon the conviction that true artistic utterance must transcend the vagaries of temporality and gesture toward the perennial Fo. "Sonnet XIII" (1646) to Henry Lawes celebrates, "To after age thou shalt be writ the man / That with smooth air could humour best our tongu." (lines 7–8), underscoring the perpetual nature of Lawes' artistry beyond the realm of death. He enshrines the power of lyric as a vessel for perpetual remembrance. Such aesthetic permanence is, for Milton as for Aristotle, not a by-product but a defining telos of art. Indeed, Aristotle's elevation of poetry above history rests on the former's capacity to distill universals from particulars, offering, as Homer (circa the 8th century BCE) has, a vision of human experience that touches upon heavenly order. For Milton, however, this poetic universality acquires an explicitly theological dimension: it is not only timeless but revelatory. He revives Orpheus as a cipher for the vatic voice—a seer-poet whose art mediates between heaven and earth—and reconfigures the topos of the solitary visionary, found in *Il Penseroso* (line 105) and *L'Allegro* (line 145) in 1645 as a symbolic conduit for eschatological prophecy.

As a matter of fact, on this aspect, as Barbara Lewalski observes, the epode of *Il Penseroso* transmutes poetic solitude into a prophetic threshold, where "old experience" (line 173) culminates in a "prophetic strain" (line 174) that discloses divine mysteries (52). In short, Milton's poetic movement from the jubilant exuberance of *L'Allegro* to the meditative inwardness of *Il Penseroso* thus enacts an ascent from aesthetic delight to theological insight. Therefore, his verse comes to be a sanctified

medium through which the eternal may be intimated. In terms of this, the poetical sanctification culminates in *PL*, whose sublimity—as Joseph Addison (1672–1719) observes in *The Spectator* (no. 279)—resides in Milton’s daring attempt to dramatize the entire arc of creation, rebellion, and redemption. This audacious scope finds concrete form in the poem’s pivotal scenes: the Son’s voluntary self-offering in bk.3, the cosmic warfare and infernal council in bk. 1–2, and the final vision of regeneration granted to Adam in bk.7. Through these episodes, the poet fuses Aristotelian structure with theological magnitude. His deployment of *peripeteia* (the reversal of Satan’s triumph into degradation in bk.10), *anagnorisis* (Adam’s moral awakening after the fall), and the causal unity of mythos transforms divine justice and mercy into palpable dramatic rhythm. Thus, the poem’s sublimity lies in the very architecture of its narrative—the fusion of classical form with the redemptive sweep of sacred history. As succinctly noted by Oka, *Poetics* constructs a literary framework that, although distancing itself from divine determinism—fate or chance—nonetheless achieves universality as a poetics of human experience (Aristotle, *Poetics* [Oka] 336). Milton, however, augments this classical structure by extending the tragic conclusion into a biblical horizon, where the degradation turns into not only a catastrophe, but a stage in the fulfillment of the providence of the deity.

This interpretive shift invites a more profound inquiry into the philosophical and structural transformation Milton performs upon the Aristotelian model. Nevertheless, what, in its granular complexity, does the Aristotelian paradigm of *PL* entail? This article contends that Milton’s epic represents not merely a Christianized reception of Aristotle’s *Poetics* but its radical transfiguration. While Aristotle frames tragedy as a mimetic art that elicits *catharsis* (κάθαρσις) through the spectacle of human suffering and recognition, Milton reorients this framework toward an eschatological horizon: the fall is not terminal but providential. Milton’s tragic vision is thus paradoxically redemptive—a theodicy articulated through epic form.

To that end, this thesis examines how Milton dramatizes the perdition through a complex interplay of rhetorical configurations, moral agency, and temporal

modalities of both *χρόνος* (*chronos*: the diachronic procession of historical temporality) and *καιρός* (*kairos*: the apocalyptic juncture of heavenly enactment). Particular attention will be given to Satan's forensic rhetoric, whose casuistic subversion of meaning reveals a deliberate corruption of language and epistemology. In contrast, the poem constructs an alternative model of Logos-rooted discourse—one that resists time distortion and participates in the perpetual order of truth. In fact, Milton's *Prolusions*, and his poems, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, "On Time," "Ad Patrem" provide further insight into this theology of speech in the sanctified time paradigm, affirming that language, properly ordered, may function as the vehicle of Fatherly freedom rather than human sophistry.

Ultimately, this study scrutinizes how *PL* exemplifies Aristotelian dramaturgy and yields a poetics of spiritual resistance and timeless significance, suffused with Christian metaphysics. Consequently, an attentive engagement with the intricacies of the Aristotelian outline is the sine qua non of comprehending the full architectural design of Milton's poetry. Finally, this paper embarks upon a meticulous exegesis of the ontological constituents of *PL* derived from Aristotelian *Poetics* and testifies the dramaturgical apparatus and rhetorical stratagems through which Satan's sophisticated façade catalyzes the ontic fall, adducing how Milton, hitherto exegetically undissected—that is, previously untouched by detailed critical and interpretative analysis—masterfully transmutes Aristotelian loci and rhetorical schemata into an unequivocally Christian ethical matrix.

2. Satan's *Hamartia*

This section examines how Milton, by appropriating and transforming Aristotelian poetics, dramatizes in *PL* the collapse of language, perception, and will in Satan's soliloquies. The central question is: in what way does Milton deploy the Aristotelian dynamics, not simply to ennoble Satan as a tragic figure, but to expose the metaphysical self-destruction of a being severed from the Logos? While critics

such as Alastair Fowler, Kathleen Swaim, and C. S. Lewis emphasize rhetorical brilliance, theological optics, and psychological defect respectively, this study hypothesizes that Milton's achievement lies in fusing these dimensions into a Christianized tragic catharsis, where Satan's voice functions both as aesthetic seduction and as a warning about the collapse of truth when speech estranges itself from the divine order.

Milton's depiction of moral trial in *PL* subjects the reader to a deliberate experience of ethical instability before restoring moral clarity through irony and contrast. To illustrate this, Fowler discerns that the adjective "horrid" (line 540)—first applied to the description of "a horrid front / Of dreadful length and dazzling arms in guise / Of warriors old with ordered spear and shield" (bk.1, lines 563–65)—undergoes a transformation into an ἀστεϊσμός (*asteismos*), an urbane yet mordantly ironic epithet, only after the reader has endured a moment of visceral pity and fear (Milton, *PL* [Fowler] 569). Through this rhetorical reversal, the poet converts what initially seems to glorify martial splendor into a moral exposure of its vanity, compelling readers to recognize that sublimity unanchored from divine truth turns to delusion. This semantic shift itself dramatizes the instability of moral perception: a word that first connoted pity and fear is later reconfigured into ironic admiration, thereby mirroring the way sinful eloquence can reframe what is dreadful as alluring. By forcing the reader to participate in this shift, the poet intimates the precariousness of human judgment—the susceptibility to find rhetorical brilliance or aesthetic pleasure even in the spectacle of corruption. In this sense, the word's modulation functions as a poetic analogue to temptation itself: the danger that what should repel may, through rhetorical re-presentation, momentarily attract. Thus, the transformation of "horrid" not only illuminates Milton's rhetorical virtuosity but also intimates the reader's latent susceptibility to peccability, sustaining the proverb's proleptic admonition that tomorrow it may be our own portion.²⁾

While pity and fear have previously been regarded as the principal affective mechanisms through which Aristotelian tragedy achieves catharsis, Oka refines

this paradigm by interpreting them not as mere emotional reactions but as ethical operations that confront spectators with the latent capacity for moral error within themselves (Aristotle, *Poetics* [Oka] 138). This interpretive nuance illuminates the complex affective economy of *PL*, in which Milton transforms Aristotelian catharsis into a theological exercise of discernment. In bk.4, the representation of Satan constitutes a paradoxical instance of tragic purification. Although the infernal tyrant would seem an unworthy subject of compassion (ἀνάξιος), Milton's deployment of introspective soliloquy—marked by rhetorical brilliance and self-torment—elicits not sentimental sympathy but a didactic catharsis: pity and fear are transmuted into moral awareness. Through this technique, the poet converts the Aristotelian experience of catharsis from an aesthetic resolution into an ethical revelation, compelling recognition of the proximity between angelic rebellion and human fallibility. By inducing both pity for Satan's desolation and fear of the reader's own moral susceptibility, Milton reconfigures the Aristotelian emotions into theological instruments of self-knowledge. In this way, he adapts the classical axiom to engender catharsis through a figure who straddles the boundary between villainy and tragic sublimity. This ethically charged ambivalence is vividly captured in the following lines, where Milton's language fuses sublime pathos with theological insight, deepening the reader's cathartic engagement:

Me miserable! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven. (bk.4, lines 73–78)

This passage evinces the arch-enemy's tragic ἀναγνώρισις (*anagnorisis*) in the wake of his apostasy—a theatrical tableau in which he apprehends that his very essence is synonymous with hell, confessing a solipsistic anguish that verges on self-annihilation. The reader, while confronted with indignation and fear at his defiance

and subsequent angelic retribution, is nevertheless granted access to pity through empathic identification with his despair and remorse. With regard to this matter, Fowler insightfully highlights that the emphatic accusative “Me miserable!” (line 73) functions as a theatrical device endemic to tragic dramaturgy, here underlining Milton’s scrupulous alignment with Aristotelian *mimesis* (Milton, *PL* [Fowler] 219). By reciting the latent possibility of sacred chastisement for any transgressor, including the reader, Milton simultaneously stirs dread and evokes compassion, thus orchestrating a consummate catharsis of the emotions.

Yet Milton’s dramaturgy of tragedy is not confined to affective response alone; it is inseparably bound to the larger symbolic economy of the poem, in which imagery of light and darkness provides the spatial and epistemological coordinates of moral vision. In this respect, Satan’s anguished cry of “myself am hell” (line 75) signals a condition of epistemic blindness, a state of separation from divine illumination. It is in this light that Satan introduces the notion of an anti-luminous architecture—a symbolic counter-structure to the radiance of the Sun—through which *PL* actualizes Satan’s alienation from divine light. This concept designates the way the poet opposes celestial luminosity (representing revelation and grace) with Satanic obscurity (representing deception and estrangement), thereby establishing the spatial and epistemological framework of the epic. As Swaim further elucidates, Milton develops a triadic schema of light—divine, radiant, and physical—that mediates between mystery and human cognition, guiding the reader from the celestial to the terrestrial in ontological descent (462). Thus, the transition from tragic catharsis to the motif of light is not a digression but a deepening: Milton’s staging of pity and fear in Satan’s soliloquy operates within the same theological economy in which light signifies truth revealed and darkness embodies the loss of it. In this way, the anti-luminous architecture functions as a theological accommodation, dramatizing the dialectic of divine revelation and human reception.

The monarch of hell, however, exists in a state of irrevocable alienation from all three modalities. Once radiant with the unmediated glory of God, he now suffers

the exile of spiritual blindness and moral disintegration. His anguished cry in lines 73–74 (“Me miserable! which way shall I fly / Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?”) registers not merely emotional torment but a profound metaphysical dislocation. Deprived of divine illumination, the apostate angel turns inward, but even there he finds only the dim flicker of a corrupted reason—what might be termed *ratio tenebrosa*, a faculty still functioning but no longer trustworthy. Viewed through Swaim’s lens, the tempter’s lament attains an archetypal instance of epistemic ruin: a being severed from the light of truth, condemned to navigate moral and ontological reality without reliable guidance. Though he frames his fall as a consequence of choice rather than necessity, the soliloquy reveals that the very conditions of that choice were already clouded by pride and envy, themselves distortions of the light he once enjoyed.

Moreover, the author of evil’s recollections of Heaven are invariably refracted through imagery of overwhelming brightness: “O Thou that with surpassing glory crowned, / Lookst from thy sole dominion like the God / Of this new world” (lines 32–34). In this quote, the “surpassing glory” (line 32) of God ends up as an unbearable presence, one that induces not awe but shame, for Satan’s vision is no longer receptive to the radiance of the Almighty. What was once illumination has developed into judgment; what was once presence has become absence. In sum, Swaim’s theological poetics of light provides a compelling interpretive framework for understanding the unrepentant’s interior collapse. His monologue turns out to be not merely an expression of regret but a dramatization of epistemological estrangement from glorious truth. The perdition, in this light, is optical: the prince of the fallen has not only fallen from Heaven but has ceased to “see afar off” (Hebrews 11:13) rightly. Thus, his descent is marked not by the loss of reason per se, but by reason’s withdrawal into the twilight of self-deception and spiritual opacity.

Building upon Swaim’s conception of the optical nature of damnation, Milton intensifies the drama of spiritual blindness by transforming Satan’s recollection into a confessional theatre of pride. Whereas the previous passage exposes the

fallen intellect's incapacity to apprehend divine radiance, this subsequent soliloquy (bk.4, lines 40–51) converts that blindness into moral self-recognition. Here, the foe of God and men lamentably declares: “Till pride and worse ambition threw me down / Warring in heaven against heaven’s matchless king: / Ah, wherefore!” (lines 40–42). In this excerpt, the prince of darkness attributes his ruin to hubristic overreach—“lifted up so high / I sdeigned subjection, and thought one step higher / Would set me highest” (lines 49–51)—thereby concretizing the self-enclosed circuit of pride that transforms illumination into judgment. Yet Milton’s rhetorical architecture extends beyond Satan’s psychology to the reader’s own interpretive vision. What Swaim’s analysis implies, but does not fully pursue, is that this optical fall functions not only as the fiend’s internal condition but also as a narrative strategy that implicates the audience. By structuring the reader’s descent alongside Satan’s, the poet dramatizes the peril of aesthetic misrecognition—the risk that poetic luminosity may seduce rather than enlighten. Thus, the reader’s engagement mirrors Satan’s epistemological disorientation, confronting them with the moral demand to discern true illumination from its fallen counterfeit.

In this sense, Milton’s theological poetics correspond to a metapoetic caution: the beauty of the ancient enemy’s lament is itself a trial of discernment. In this sense, the fall of light becomes also the fall of reading, whereby the soul’s ability to “see rightly” is tested not only within the poem but through the poem. This recursive optic collapse distinguishes *PL* from prior epic models, converting the act of reading into a moral enterprise. Thus, the poem enacts a double illumination: it exposes the accuser of mankind’s spiritual opacity while inviting the reader to recover sight through the exercise of interpretive charity and theological vigilance.

The Devil’s tunnel vision, especially, triggered by hauteur, renders his contrition unexpectedly poignant, imbuing him with a layered psychagogic depth that transcends the simplistic moral allegory. As Alberto Cacicedo mentions the prince of darkness’s *hamartia* (ἀμαρτία) of being apt to form seemingly intuitive conclusions based on limited inductive reasoning rooted in past experiences like ordinary

humans (18), Milton takes advantage of reader's compassion and distills into the tempter's monologue a momentous inner conflict between aspiration and despair, thereby enriching *PL* with a profound psychological gravitas befitting the apex of tragic poetics, rather than a mere homily on vice and recompense. Besides, Corina Sandiuc perceptively posits that Milton, whilst orienting the reader toward a holy perspective, simultaneously imbues the tyrant in pandemonium with distinctly anthropomorphic dispositions—unyielding insubordination, indomitable indignation, poignant contrition, and unchecked hubris—therewith fashioning him as an unexpectedly compelling protagonist whose clarion call for autonomy reverberates with the ethos of terrestrial insurgents, thus amplifying the audience's capacity for compassion (67). This impassioned plea for self-determination is epitomized in Satan's defiant proclamation, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (bk1, line 263), which encapsulates his radical vision of freedom through rebellion.

In contrast to these prior studies, this article declares that the monarch of hell's inner division, as portrayed by Milton, functions not merely as a source of psychological profundity that elicits the reader's emotional sympathy, but more fundamentally as a rhetorical manifestation of the distortion of the Logos itself. That is, the foe of God's proclamations of self-determination and poetic assertions of rebellion, while superficially compelling in their eloquence, paradoxically enact an internal disintegration of meaning, a rupture of reason—whereby the more the reader is drawn into sympathy, the more the very trustworthiness of his language itself begins to erode. For Milton, this dynamic exceeds the bounds of characterization; it constitutes a biblically inflected warning. The moment language is severed from the Logos of the Creator, both epistemological coherence and moral order begin to collapse. Thus, the seducer's rhetoric evolves into the site of a poetic and metaphysical experiment that dramatizes the catastrophic consequences of linguistic estrangement from celestial truth.

This rhetorical disintegration, wherein Satan's eloquence collapses into a distortion of the Logos, also materializes in his own self-identification. It is precisely

in this self-reflective lament that Milton dramatizes the Aristotelian principle of *ἁμαρτία* (*hamartía*)—the error of judgment that precipitates catastrophe as follows:

O had his powerful destiny ordained
 Me some inferior angel, I had stood
 Then happy; no unbounded hope had raised
 Ambition” (bk.4 lines 58–61).

In this quote, the lacerating reflection on a humbler station immune to the ravages of insatiable aspiration manifests the very principle of *ἁμαρτία* (*hamartía*), derived from *ἁμαρτάνειν* (*hamartanein*), “to err” or “miss the mark,” which, in Aristotelian tragedy, precipitates the *katastrophē* (catastrophe). Aristotle delineates the tragic protagonist as neither preeminently virtuous nor wholly depraved and contends that ruin befalls such a hero not through vice per se but δι’ ἁμαρτίαν (*di’ hamartian*)—an error of judgment (1453a7). In accordance with the axiom, Milton’s unwavering allegiance to the Aristotelian dramaturgical schema is manifest: though Satan boasts lofty rank and commands the veneration of infernal cohorts, his *raison d’être* founders upon the fatal disjunction between reason and desire. This insufficiency engenders a consummate *ἔλεος–φόβος* dynamic, effectuating an Aristotelian catharsis through the twin passions of pity and fear. In this manner, the archfiend laments: “some other power / As great might have aspired, and me though mean / Drawn to his part” (bk.4, lines 61–63), in which he acknowledges being ultimately swayed by greater forces—despite his subordinate status—resulting in his inevitable fall. This becomes a poignant catalyst for the reader’s sympathy.

On his mental matter, Lewis reads Satan as psychologically defective: his self-styled victimhood is delusional, springing from egocentrism rather than real injustice (95–96). His formulation is valuable because it pinpoints with precision the psychological incoherence of Satan’s rhetoric, showing how his claim to liberty collapses into self-contradiction. Namely, in Milton’s poetic theory, the fall of the demons’ prince connotes an ontological fissure—an existential contradiction rooted in the creature’s defiance of the very source of its being. Here this analysis’s argument

builds on Lewis's insight while extending it: *PL*, at this point, emerges as a meta-physical drama of the will's self-negation. By rejecting the Messiah's rightful hierarchy, Satan undermines his own dignity, making his rhetoric of liberty self-defeating. As Lewis notes, he devolves from liar into the very embodiment of falsehood, consumed by his own contradictions ("*causa sui*") (96–97). In his account of "*causa sui*," Satan is condemned to become the lie he utters. His analysis is compelling as far as it goes, but it risks reducing Milton's theological drama to a purely psychological pathology. This reading, by contrast, stresses how this collapse of self is also a rhetorical and ontological crisis: Satan becomes the very dramatization of what it means when language is severed from the Logos. Confronted with the elevation of the Messiah, a being ontologically superior and sublimely ordained, Satan's self-destructive autonomy becomes emblematic of Milton's larger warning about the dangers of eloquence divorced from divine truth.

Thus, throughout the epic, the father of lies plunges into the agent of his own undoing, sawing off the very branch upon which he sits in a more profound meta-physical dimension: by revolting against the Creator, he revolts against the source of all being, including the power by which he revolts. His fall, therefore, encapsulates the tragedy of self-divorcement from the wellspring of both order and identity. In this way, the king of the ethereal race in hell's soliloquy functions as the cosmic amplification of a distinctly human pathology: the corrosive effects of pride masquerading as justice, and the existential hollowness that ensues when the self denies its existential ground. Milton's Satan is, therefore, not merely an ethical transgressor, but a tragic emblem of self-annihilating autonomy—a figure whose grandeur lies not in heroism, but in the sublime futility of his revolt.

3. *Apobaterion*

This section investigates how Milton, by adopting and transforming Aristotelian categories of tragedy, depicts Satan's fall not merely as a moral allegory or

psychological portrait but as a linguistic and temporal disintegration: a dramatization of rhetoric split up with the Logos and time divorced from *kairos*. The guiding question is: how does Milton render Satan's soliloquy a theatre of rhetorical and temporal collapse, thereby reshaping Aristotelian catharsis into a Christian pedagogy of discernment?

First and foremost, the trajectory of Satan's degeneration offers more than a moral narrative—it exposes the theological anatomy of sin as ontological decay. As Lewis delineates the seducer's fall as progressive degradation: from archangel to politician, spy, voyeur, toad, and at last a mute, crawling serpent (99). That is to say, this wicked metamorphosis is not simply symbolic, but dramatizes the inner logic of sin as a process of spiritual self-disfigurement, in which grandeur is corroded from within by pride, envy, and willed blindness. In the upshot, Milton constructs a spiritual physics where sin inexorably consumes the self, reducing angelic potential to serpentine abjection. In a move that blurs the boundary between poetic character and moral anthropology, Lewis forwards the notion that Satan's allure lies not in grand rebellion but in his disturbing closeness to human weakness, drawing readers into complicity by reflecting their own fallen nature (101). His resonance lies in this uncanny familiarity: he is not a distant moral abstraction, but the grotesque reflection of our own capacity for self-deception, pride, and spiritual ruin. By holding up the owner of the palace of hell as a reflector to the reader, Milton implicates both the individual conscience and the sheer instability of the human will in the drama of moral failure. Consequently, building upon Lewis's incisive articulation of the adversary's ontological descent, this paper seeks to advance the discussion by foregrounding the rhetorical architecture through which this descent is linguistically enacted.

Lewis masterfully unveils the moral and metaphysical implications of Satan's fall, diagnosing his self-styled victimhood as delusional and his rhetoric of liberty as self-defeating. This insight is valuable in exposing the psychological incoherence at the heart of Satan's posture. Nonetheless, he tends to regard rhetoric primarily

as a vehicle of illusion or delusion, thereby reducing its role to that of a symptom. Establishing on but moving beyond this account, this study proposes that the arch-enemy's speech is constitutive of it: the performative nature of his utterances enacts a continual severance from the Logos, rendering his identity progressively incoherent through the very structure of his discourse. In this reading, Milton's epic becomes a tragic meditation on the corrosion of meaning itself when language is split from truth. The poem's theological depth thus resides in its dramatization of the way rhetorical distortion initiates and accelerates this disintegration, whereby the fall into falsehood is both a spiritual and linguistic catastrophe. In this light, the apostate angel is less a moral exemplar of hubris than a figure who embodies the entropy of language once it has forfeited its anchorage in divine reason.

Nevertheless, Milton does not confine this collapse to language alone; the disintegration of speech is mirrored in the interior life of the speaker himself. In other words, the corruption of rhetoric corresponds to a corruption of psyche. As far as the psychology of the arch fallen angel is concerned, Sandiuc aptly notes this engenders the reader's emotional connection with Satan, compelling empathy, yet beneath the surface of his self-exonerating rhetoric lies a profound existential crisis (67). In fact, the seditioner's reflection stands as both a lament over his failure to comprehend the true justice of God and a dramatic mirror held up to the reader—a reminder of the inherent frailty of human understanding and the moral hazards of intellectual pride. In detail, Milton, through the archfiend's inner tumult, compels us to confront our own susceptibility to misjudgment when we encounter that which exceeds our grasp.

While Sandiuc insightfully underscores how Milton crafts Satan as a figure eliciting empathy through psychological nuance and existential disquiet as above, this paper stands in contrast to corroborate that such empathy is not an end in itself but a rhetorical threshold—a liminal space through which the reader is required to pass in order to discern the very nature of deception in Eden. The tempter's persuasive force derives from Milton's calculated exploitation of the reader's affective susceptibility to draw attention to the dangers of moral complacency. For example, *Prolusion 6*

castigates the arrogance of scholars who disdain disciplines they themselves fail to appreciate—a hubris born not of discernment but of a refusal to acknowledge their own limitations: to disparage dialectic or natural philosophy, as many do, is not an indictment of those arts, but a confession of one's incapacity to engage them meaningfully (*CPW* 1:271). This accusation, however, extends beyond mere academic presumption; it speaks to a broader moral failure—namely, the refusal to pursue wisdom because of the discomfort it entails. For the poet, the rejection of difficult knowledge is not a neutral gesture but an abdication of one's rational and ethical vocation. True learning, as he envisions it, is not simply the acquisition of facts but the disciplined refinement of the soul through laborious engagement with truth.

Similarly, *Prolusion* 7 rebukes the slothful who decry the uncertainty or abstruseness of learning, insisting that these are not defects in knowledge itself but symptoms of human weakness: in this standpoint, the flight from intellectual difficulty becomes spiritually perilous, for it signals a deeper unwillingness to be transformed by truth (*CPW* 1:302). He concludes with force and clarity that it is sincere inquiry and moral fortitude—not complaint nor evasion—that alone yield incomparable wisdom and enduring reward. In this slant, intellectual indolence and scorn, when confronted with the limits of understanding, emit the very seeds of ruin—echoes of the Satanic misapprehension of divine justice. Through such parallels, Milton urges the reader to embrace a lifelong discipline of humility, ethical self-scrutiny, and intellectual vigilance.

These aspects disclose, therefore, that the Devil's interior fragmentation functions, rather than as a psychological profile, as a performative enactment of rhetorical disintegration—the dramatization of the Logos fractured from sacred intelligibility. In this reading, the poet implicates rhetoric itself in the fall, warning against eloquence severed from truth. Thus, his poetic method ultimately seeks not to humanize the monarch of hell for sympathy's sake but to caution the reader against the seductive gravity of disordered speech, and to recover a theologically grounded model of discourse wherein reason, will, and language remain in harmonious alignment. In

order to illustrate how eloquence, when severed from truth, collapses into a mode of self-deception, Milton offers in Satan a paradigmatic instance of fallen discourse. In this context, Lewalski's observation is instructive: she contrasts the harrow of the enemy of God with the Elizabethan tragic hero, whose soliloquy culminates in anagnorisis—self-revelation—whereas the seditioner's counterpart spirals into a labyrinthine process of self-justification (98). By juxtaposing Satan's expressions of sorrow with instances of cognitive inconsistency and circular reasoning, Milton presents a figure whose psychological complexity is undermined by an inability to transcend self-referential logic. The limited capacity of the proprietor of pandemonium for genuine self-awareness and *διαλεκτική* (dialectical engagement) with opposing moral frameworks eventually restricts him from attaining the metaphysical gravitas typical of tragic figures like Oedipus in Greek tragedy or Milton's Samson, who are defined by sustained introspection and epistemological depth. Thus, the ringleader of the throned powers in hell represents a symbol of fallen intellect and moral disintegration, as in the following lines:

So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;
Evil be thou \my good; by thee at least
Divided empire with heaven's king I hold
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;
As man ere long, and this new world shall know. (bk.4, lines 108–13)

Satan's tragic impasse in bk.4 directly contrasts with this divinely sanctioned structure of light and insight. His imaginative faculty, once angelic and visionary, degenerates into a solipsistic loop that can no longer generate a *mythos* capable of transcendence. When he attempts to narrate a hypothetical return to heaven, he fails precisely because he refuses to envision a power greater than himself. His imagination is no longer illumined by the holy light that enables the accommodation of truth to fallen understanding.

According to Janet Leslie Knedlik, instead, the adversary's inward gaze is lit

only by the dimming embers of pride—a parody of illumination that marks his fall into epistemic darkness (36). Thus, while the faithful are guided by a descending arc of revelatory light that accommodates the supreme truth to human finitude, the chief of rebel angels rejects this system, whereby he confines himself to a mythic plot where redemption is structurally foreclosed. To put it another way, in the soliloquy, the foe of God and man accomplishes the tragic embodiment of the soul's estrangement from *nunc stans* and moral regeneration. As Harry Moore exposts, by rejecting repentance and obedience, the Devil's king cannot redeem the past; instead, he collapses into a private hell where time congeals into an unhealed wound of irretrievable loss (26). Thus, Milton's theology of time and identity is crystallized in this soliloquy: by refusing the dynamic flow of divine grace, Satan chooses instead to inhabit an ossified temporality—one in which selfhood is locked in a tragic stasis, severed from the redemptive arc of providential history. On the other hand, whereas Moore's critic underpins failed introspection and moral paralysis of the chairperson of the infernal court, this paper certifies that his soliloquy simultaneously dramatizes a broader poetic experiment: the destabilization of lyric voice itself. In severing the soliloquy from *anagnorisis* and aligning it with recursive, unmoored subjectivity, Milton transforms a convention of tragic self-knowledge into a stage upon which the very categories of personhood and the notion of time collapse. That is to say, Satan's soliloquy grows into not the implement of self-revelation, but the theatre of self-disintegration. In this light, his monologue functions as a distorted anti-logos—a rhetorical arrangement wherein language, rather than mediating truth, enacts the dissolution of rational and theological order. Milton thereby exposes how rhetoric, when untethered from blessed orientation, attains a vortex of ontological fragmentation.

Furthermore, the concept of *apobaterion* for the axis of time in this soliloquy of the seditioner serves as the dramatic juncture of his psychological and moral descent. The ancient Greek ἀποβάσις (*apobasis*), which literally denotes disembarking or descending, offers a suggestive etymological parallel for Milton's representation of Satan. By analogy, what is termed ἀποβάτεριον (*apobaterion*) symbolizes the

decisive dramatic moment when a character irrevocably crosses a moral threshold, signifying an irreversible existential pivot. To be sure, such a specific category does not appear as a codified topos in extant Greek tragedy, where descent is generally figured in terms of *κατάβασις* (*katabasis*) (e.g., the underworld journeys of Odysseus or Theseus), which serves as a path to knowledge or renewal. As a matter of fact, in Greek tragedy, there is no true equivalent to Milton's Satan. Tragic antagonists such as Aegisthus (Agamemnon) or Creon (Antigone) are defined by human error (*hamartia*) and political overreach, not by metaphysical rebellion against the divine order. The closest analogue may be Prometheus, who defies Zeus by giving fire to humankind, but he remains a heroic figure—his rebellion stems from altruism and earns the audience's acclamation.

Satan, by contrast, begins with lofty rhetoric of freedom but collapses into self-contradiction, deceit, and ontological disintegration. To sum up, Satan's fall signifies an irreversible moral and existential descent, a uniquely Christian reconfiguration of classical motifs. Milton's adaptation of *apobaterion's* etymological resonance dramatizes the irreversible fall of the damned crew as a uniquely Christian inflection of the tragic crossing: not a spatial journey but a moral disembarkation from the Logos itself. Thus, Satan inherits the rebel archetype from antiquity but radically transforms it: whereas Prometheus is a benefactor who resists tyranny, Satan becomes a malefactor: the embodiment of linguistic corruption and metaphysical collapse, a figure without direct precedent in Greek tragedy. In this way, the poet creatively extends Hellenistic categories into his theological poetics, converting a physical metaphor into an emblem of spiritual catastrophe, which is, in *PL*, first exemplified by the assertion of the prince of darkness in hell: "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven" (bk1, lines 254–56). This earlier declaration of disembarkation of *scala naturae* encapsulates his rejection of tragic self-awareness, asserting his rational agency and exacerbating his moral corruption.

To fully apprehend Milton's vision of damnation utterly illustrated by the

archfiend's *apobaterion*, it is inevitable to attend to the psychological topography of his interior monologue, wherein temporality itself fulfills the stage upon which spiritual ruin is enacted. In Milton's poetic universe, "change" often signifies the ineluctable progression of linear time, while "fixity" denotes a blind and futile resistance to its unfolding (Moore 26). What emerges here is not merely a psychological paralysis—a stasis of will and judgment in which the mind perceives its ruin yet cannot alter its course—but a metaphysical rebellion, a refusal to participate in the inviolable economy of time, and thus a self-imposed exile from the teleological arc of eternity. To summarize, in Milton's cosmology, time is the very framework through which consecrated providence is disclosed. Thus, the God against whom the chief of the damned crew revolts is none other than the embodiment of temporal order itself; his rebellion constitutes an unmistakable act of resistance against the axis of sacred time. For example, as for the insurrection agitated by the king of demons, then, it constitutes a cleavage of substantialism—a refusal to be situated within the redemptive chronology of salvific history. In this light, Satan's defiance signifies an ontological severance from *kairos*, the divinely ordained temporariness in which grace and purpose converge. In truth, the problem of time in *PL* serves as a decisive axis distinguishing venerable grace from diabolical self-deception—an ontological misapprehension at the heart of Milton's epic theology. The monarch of hell and his fallen host, severed from the operations of hallowed *kairos*, instead place their hope in the inertial drift of *chronos*, erroneously believing that temporal duration might bring redemption. It is precisely this misplaced trust that epitomizes their metaphysical failure. Therefore, Milton presents time and language as theological categories that distinguish fallen from unfallen perception. The treatment of Satan's ephemerality and linguistic limitation thus works as a profound meditation on the epistemological consequences of sin.

As Valerie Carnes attests, the lord of demons, bound to the immediacy of time, speaks only in a literal mode, unable to grasp or employ metaphor in moral or theological terms. (527). This does not mean that Satan never uses figures of

speech—indeed, his oratory abounds with tropes and grandiose imagery—but that his figurative language is emptied of transcendent reference. His metaphors collapse into mere ornament or manipulation, unable to mediate divine truth. This narrowing of perception of time directly conditions the narrowing of expressive capacity. Just as the king of the powers of darkness is estranged from numinous temporality—*kairos* rather than *chronos*—so too is he derailed from the sacramental function of language: its ability to signify truths that transcend material immediacy. Milton thus binds fallen time and fallen language in a single epistemic collapse. Unlike the unfallen angels, the legion of rebellion speaks in a debased literalism, scorning metaphor because his fallen mind cannot apprehend it. (Carnes 527). This can be seen, for example, on his triumphal entry into hell. Whereas the Genesis (1:11) employs the generic “fruit” to preserve its polyvalent theological resonance, Satan, in recounting his supposed triumph, dismissively reduces the primal lapse to “an apple”: “him by fraud I have seduced / From his creator, and the more to increase / Your wonder, with an apple” (bk.10, lines 485–87). In this passage, metaphor no longer mediates higher truths but is mocked, inverted, or flattened into material categories, dramatizing what Carnes terms the fallen literalism of Satanic discourse. In this way, Milton casts Satan’s speech as the linguistic analogue of spiritual exile—banished from the very capacity to signify beyond the material. His literalism is not a stylistic choice, but the mark of a metaphysical impoverishment that renders him incapable of participating in venerable knowledge. As a consequence, the poet positions the Seducer’s truncated temporal recognition as a central symptom of his epistemological ruin. His incapacity to apprehend blessed temporality—inflected by providential design and eschatological coherence—parallels a deeper moral ineptitude: the failure to fathom the ontological enormity of the fall.

As Carnes approves, in *PL* the prince of demons, deprived of *ἀνάμνησις* (*anamnesis*) and foresight: the capacity to discern the consequences of present choices by situating them within a providential continuum, perceives only fragmented instants rather than a purposeful continuum of time, and this confinement leads to

his misreading of human disobedience (528). Actually, for the chief enemy, the post-lapsarian world is not a diminished vestige of celestial harmony, but rather “a spacious world, to our native heaven / Little inferior” (bk.10, lines 467–68) or “a fabric wonderful / of absolute perfection” (bk.10, lines 482–83). Such a collapse of sacred temporality yields a concomitant theological diminution: by refiguring the fall as a banal act of consumption, Satan discloses the irreparable deficit of his fallen intellect as well as desacralizes sin.

In addition, this incapacity for prescience structures not only his perception but also his rhetoric. The author of evil and his cohort, devoid of the capacity to foresee the consequences of their rebellion, cling to rhetorical illusions. As Moore sheds light on the fact the Devil’s declaration that “Here at least / We shall be free” (bk.1, lines 258–59) is not a mark of prescience but of tragic delusion, his assertion that they shall “re-ascend” (bk.1, line 634) functions less as a feasible strategy than as hollow exhortation and in the infernal council, both Belial and Mammon similarly place faith in the promise of time unmoored from grace: Belial, for instance, speculates that “changed at length . . . / the never-ending flight / of future days may bring, what chance, what change / Worth waiting” (bk.2, lines 217–23), as well as the fact that hell itself might eventually become tolerable—failing to apprehend that time, having not caused their fall, cannot restore them (28). As a result, Milton constructs a tragic irony at the pivot of the infernal narrative: the very medium in which the demons invest their hope—*chronos*—achieves the venue of their existential imprisonment, a parody of providential temporariness that highlights the futility of redemption divorced from divine initiative. Yet while Carnes and Moore put emphasis on the epistemic and theological constraints that fallen evanescence imposes on the great seducer and his cohort, this paper, in turn, enlarges the claim that Milton’s deeper innovation lies in dramatizing how fallen time itself turns into a rhetorical apparatus of damnation. The manipulation of chronometric discourse by the monarch in hell—his appeals to freedom, chance, and re-ascent—is not merely deluded hopes, but Satan’s poetic acts that unwittingly entrench his condition. In this reading,

Satan's speeches function as corrupted *chronotopes*: spatiotemporal imaginaries that encode his estrangement from grace and reproduce that estrangement through persuasive form. Milton thus offers a poetics of spiritual time, wherein salvation and perdition are not only metaphysical destinies, but narrative structures—configurations of speech and temporality whose logic either gestures toward redemption or reifies damnation.

One striking illustration of this lies in the fallen angels' discourse on hope, which dramatizes precisely such a distorted temporality. On this point, John Peter claims that Milton's assertion on hell, "hope never comes / That comes to all" (bk.1, lines 65–66)—is contradicted by later references to "false presumptuous hope" (bk.2, line 522), "Fallacious hope" (bk.2, line 568), or by the seemingly optimistic speeches of Moloch and Mammon during the infernal council, rests upon a misreading of Milton's theological and narrative design (33). This objection fails to distinguish between genuine theological hope—rooted in grace and directed toward salvation—and illusory or perverse hope, which arises from self-deception and spiritual blindness. For this reason, the narrator's categorical statement must be read as a verdict of the Supreme Being: hell, in its true ontological state, is the absolute negation of salvific hope. In contrast, the rebel angels' expressions of "hope" are not rebuttals of this truth, but tragic confirmations of their alienation from it. What Moloch, Mammon, and others articulate are not signs of authentic expectation, but rhetorical manifestations of their fallen reason—"false presumptuous hope" (bk.2, line 522)—born of pride, denial, and the absence of divine illumination. This is not an inconsistency but a deliberate theological irony. Milton juxtaposes the narrator's omniscient pronouncement with the self-deluding optimism of the spirits of hell to underline the chasm between truth and delusion, grace and sin. Indeed, the damned crew are not capable of imagining the bright future exactly because they misunderstand their state; they simulate a glimmer of hope in speech and counsel, but what they experience is no more than a perversion of the theological virtue. The resulting irony is dramatic rather than logical, intensifying the tragedy of the fallen state

wherein even the capacity to hope has led to a mechanism of further self-damnation.

One further expression of this poetics of distorted time appears in the fallen angels' rhetoric of self-sufficiency. Mammon, for instance, advances a vision of diabolical autonomy, proposing that they might "Thrive under evil" (bk.2, line 261) and construct a rival empire "By policy and long process of time" (bk.2, line 296). Nonetheless, this apparent confidence in temporal endurance proves void, a parody of providential history without true eschatological horizon. Similarly, Beelzebub invokes revenge as "revenge though slow, / Yet ever plotting" (bk.2, lines 337–38), underscoring the irony that the rebel angels mimic the form of providence while remaining irredeemably severed from it. As Moore observes, such appeals to temporality only entrench their condition, transforming time itself into the medium of their imprisonment (28). Their scheming recapitulates the form of salvific temporality without its substance, rendering their every hope a grim satire of grace. Thus, the legion of Satan's trust in temporal prolongation emerges as a tragic inversion of Christian eschatology—a mimicry of providential time devoid of transcendence. Through this dialectic, Milton obliges the reader to confront the dual nature of time: as either the medium of divine intention or the crucible wherein sin calcifies into unending loss. In other words, in the prelapsarian theology, time acquires meaning only through its covenant with consecrated grace; for those who repudiate this grace, time results in a structure of interminable discouragement. Consequently, the rebel angels, having forfeited the good, are condemned to a grotesque mimicry of what they have rejected, and their obstinate refusal to learn from the past leaves them fundamentally incapacitated in responding meaningfully to the future. Moore adumbrates that the fallen angels' hopes are but delusions; even Satan acknowledges that he acts not from any "hope / of Paradise for hell" (bk.9, lines 475–76), but from the perverse allure of destruction. For the damned, the future is no horizon of possibility but only an interminable extension of affliction.

Milton situates this despair within a larger theological architecture. In his vision, time is a faculty oriented toward God, through which the soul participates in

grace and transformation. Once that orientation is lost, time degenerates into sheer duration—directionless, graceless, and irredeemable. In pandemonium, therefore, temporality itself becomes the structure of despair, the very measure of spiritual dereliction. In fact, the demons in the infernal court perceive time as an oppressive duration marked by protracted anguish. As Moore holds that Beëlzebub refers to the “long debate” (bk.2, line 390), while Satan recounts his corruption of mankind as “Long were to tell / What I have done” (bk.10, lines 469–70), evoking time as a burdensome and excessive continuum: His prediction to Adam and Eve encapsulates this view: “Live while ye may, / Yet happy pair: enjoy, till I return, / Short pleasures, for long woes are to succeed.” (bk.4, lines 533–35). In short, time is imagined not as redemptive unfolding but as a linear descent into suffering. Namely, this perception of time as tyrannical and unredeemable reflects not the psychological state of the fallen cherubim alone, but also signals a deeper metaphysical reality: for Milton, the experience of time is frequently theologically inflected.

This conception of time as burdensome and spiritually void finds a striking analogue in Milton's early academic oratory. Particularly, *Prolusion 3* launches a scathing censure of the arid and lifeless nature of philosophical and theological disputations, visualizing such writings as abstruse, joyless, and oppressively gloomy—lacking both delight and educational value, and inducing nothing but ennui and aversion in their readers: the speech is replete with mythological imagery—invoking, for example, the Augean stables and the cave of Trophonius—to dramatize the ordeal of engaging with these works, likening the experience to an infernal form of labor (*CPW* 1:241–42). Through a sustained inquiry into rhetorical technique, *Prolusions 3* exposes the tedium of academic controversy and calls into question the intellectual merit of discourses that neither instruct nor please, much less persuade. He further argues that the stylistic poverty of these texts reverberates through their conceptual barrenness; their prose, lifeless and desiccated, is entirely unworthy of the Muses' inspiration: with biting irony, he concludes by implying that the only proper dwelling for such scholarship is the barren foothills of Mount Parnassus—overgrown with

nettles and brambles, far removed from the divine dances and songs of the muses (*CPW* 1:243). In this light, *Prolusion 3* reinforces the central claim: time untethered with heaven's telos, whether in pandemonium or in academic polemic, collapses into futility and affliction. Milton's speech, as a whole, works as both a satire and a cautionary exposition, grounded in classical rhetorical tradition, against the excesses of formalism and vacuous intellectualism. It exhorts its audience to re-evaluate the true purpose of learned inquiry. In this perspective, the speech can be identified as a manifesto for intellectual integrity—a defense of language as the soul's expression, and a plea for the restoration of knowledge grounded not in ornament but in spirit. It is, in essence, a declaration of ethical intelligence, as urgent and resonant in our time as in its own.

Hence, time divorced from academic telos—deprived of grace and oriented solely toward the self—measures up to an arena of unrelieved suffering and existential inertia. The inability of the powers of darkness to conceive of time as anything other than duration underscores their spiritual myopia: they are incapable of envisioning *kairos*, or sacred time, and thus misrecognize temporal extension as both interminable punishment and proof of their alienation. Thus, the infernal imagination of time completes less a chronometric miscalculation than a metaphysical condition—a perversion of the notion of time that parallels their fall from beatitude. Their every attempt to mitigate suffering or restructure hell is the very principle of their fall: temporality itself is converted into an instrument of damnation. What Milton metaphorizes is the transformation of time into a theological antithesis of grace.

4. Conclusion

The infernal host's incapacity to conceive of time apart from affliction discloses a deeper ontological rupture: for them, temporality itself becomes the very form of suffering, a duration stripped of redemptive possibility and transformed from the

medium of divine becoming into the emblem of damnation. As Moore observes, even when the fallen spirits imagine heaven, they project their own affliction onto it: Satan asks “how long / Before had been contriving” (bk.9, lines 138–39), Mammon calls eternal praise “wearisome” (bk.2, lines 247–49), and Satan himself confesses gratitude to God as “So Burdensome” (bk.4, lines 52–53). In each case, eternity is misconstrued not as grace but as endless toil, confirming their alienation from sacred temporality (30). In each case, the speech betrays a vision of temporality reduced to burden, monotony, and exhaustion. This inability to conceive of time apart from affliction reveals a deeper ontological rupture—one in which time is experienced as the very form of suffering itself. For the infernal host, temporariness includes a condition of existential arrest, a duration stripped of redemptive possibility, thereby transforming temporality from the medium of divine becoming into the very emblem of damnation.

As Moore continues, for the ethereal race in hell, the past is an irretrievable loss, the future a nebulous stretch of inescapable anguish, and the present, necessarily, a scene of torment wherein “peace / And rest can never dwell” (bk.1, lines 65–66), so that their minds are restless; time itself is “irksome hours” (bk.2, line 527), unlike the “happy hours” of heaven (bk.3, lines 417): like Sin herself, they are caught in “perpetual agony and pain” (bk.2, line 861), searching for “what best may ease / The present misery, and render hell / More tolerable” (bk.2, lines 459–60), but always within a structure of time that offers no escape (30). While Moore accurately emphasizes this phenomenological experience of time in hell as static and bereft of eschatological orientation, this paper confirms that Milton’s deeper poetic strategy lies in making time itself rhetorically productive: a recursive discursive fabric that perpetuates damnation through the very articulation of temporal imagination. In other words, the infernal imagination does not merely misperceive time; it actively constructs time through speech acts that reinforce exile, turning rhetoric into the engine of perdition itself. Indeed, the grand adversary and his cohort do not passively endure time as excruciation; they actively narrativize impermanence in ways that

enclose themselves within a mythopoetic loop, echoing but inverting sacred typologies. This recurrent logic is most vividly enacted in Satan's prophetic declarations, which mirror—but mock—the biblical pattern of fall, crucifixion, redemption, and glorification. For instance, when he assures his followers that “from this descent / Celestial virtues rising will appear / More glorious and more dread than from no fall” (bk.2, lines 14–16), his rhetoric projects a redemptive trajectory that his own narrative cannot sustain. Similarly, in promising a “re-ascend” to heaven (bk.1, line 633), he unwittingly seals his perpetual descent, since his words inaugurate expectations that can never be fulfilled. Thereby, the poet dramatizes how rhetorical form itself can become metaphysically determinative: when severed from the Logos of deity, speech collapses into a self-fulfilling prophecy of adversity. In this perspective, Milton's poetic theology projects a radical principle that temporality is spiritually authored. Fallen time is rhetorically produced by hellish creatures whose speech no longer participates in the regenerative order of divine language. Thus, the speeches of the author of evil for councils to exhortations encompass metaphysical constructs: they do not describe time as much as they instantiate a broken temporality.

In this way, *PL* invites the reader to consider the redemptive or ruinous capacities of language as that which not only reflects but shapes time, so that the poem functions as a crucible where rhetoric reveals its power to construct spiritual reality—either aligning speech with divine truth or collapsing it into damnation. There appears a concrete instance of this principle in Milton's depiction of pandemonium, which operates as a theological metaphor for time divested of blessing—an endless extension without promise of transformation, wherein the soul, cut off from angelic communion, is trapped in a static and unredeemable present as well as a spatial punishment.

1) All quotations from *Paradise Lost* are taken from the Fowler edition and will hereinafter be referred to as *PL*.

- 2) Milton offers not merely a historical meditation on chivalric culture but a sustained theological and moral interrogation of martial virtue. His treatment of knightly honor in hell transcends mere satire; it is reduced to a vehicle for metaphysical critique, exposing the disjunction between outward strength and inward truth. As J. B. Broadbent enunciates, in the infernal realm, Lucifer and his legions engage in elaborate displays of militarized pageantry—jousts and tournaments that parody heavenly order and reflect the perverse mimicry endemic to the fallen state: this infernal chivalry, replete with ostentation and vainglory, presents conquest and bloodshed as the apogee of human glory, thereby inverting the divine hierarchy (96). Earth, too, is cast as a satellite of Hell, echoing its corrupted values and idolizing force over righteousness. This vision of infernal spectacle is, therefore, a deliberate inversion of glorified order—a grotesque caricature in which the simulacrum of nobility masks ontological decay. In such distorted reflections, Milton compels us to question the very foundations of glory and honor as conceived in a world estranged from grace. Moreover, Satan's scorn unmasks the futility of temporal conquest and anticipates a new model of sanctified heroism rooted not in violence but in meekness, wisdom, and the redemptive force of truth (Broadbent 96). Thus, Milton dismantles the terrestrial ideal of chivalric virtue, revealing it to be a diabolical distortion of genuine moral strength. In its place, he intimates a spiritual chivalry that resists spectacle and exalts the quiet endurance of the soul before God. This transvaluation of heroism stands not only as a poetic innovation but as a theological imperative, calling the reader to beat swords into plowshare and then discern between temporal acclaim and unchanging truth.

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