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Publication Date

2018-03-01

Undergraduate

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

OPENING THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION IN *PARADISE LOST*: SEEING AND HEARING
AS IMPERFECTLY GENDERED, OR AS TOOLS FOR DIVINE REVELATION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

BY

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LOS ANGELES, CA

MARCH 2018

ABSTRACT

Opening the Doors of Perception in *Paradise Lost*: Seeing and Hearing as Imperfectly Gendered,
or as Tools for Divine Revelation

By Samuel Bozoukov

This thesis explores the gendering of seeing and hearing in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the role these faculties play in acquiring higher knowledge and understanding. Although we might assume that Adam and Eve's perceptual faculties work perfectly before the fall, I show that seeing and hearing operate imperfectly both prior to and after the fall. Adam and Eve abuse the faculties of sight and sound by placing undue confidence in their ability to accurately represent the world around them. However, I claim that Milton's poem does not treat either sense as lost; instead, it demonstrates that when both senses are used in conjunction with the imagination, individuals can experience divine revelation. I suggest Milton's conception of the imagination moves between all the senses, embodying a wandering cognitive movement necessary for free will. Ultimately, I argue that *Paradise Lost* justifies both seeing and hearing, despite the fact that Eve introduces humanity to evil by listening to Satan.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Kareem for putting up with my incoherent ideas, always giving sagacious advice when I sent her overly long drafts. Professor Kareem has been wiser, kinder, and more patient than Athena, listening to me when I was anxious and never treating my thoughts as trivial. I am eternally grateful to her for introducing me to Lucretius, who undergirds much of my thesis, and Bruno Latour. If my thesis has anything of worth, it is only because of Professor Kareem.

I am also inexpressibly grateful to my family and friends. To my family, thank you for letting me become the person I am, supporting me in my convoluted visions. I know literature is not typically considered a safe career, but were it not for your support, I would not be so ineffably happy. To my friends, I am thankful for all the ears you lent me, giving my heart a place of rest.

I am indebted to my high school journalism advisor and English teacher Mr. Wenger. He taught me how writing can unearth and resolve life's complications. Thank you for believing me when I did not believe in myself.

To Mr. Hamilton, thank you for giving me my first job. Through him, I learned that teaching is what I want to do for the rest of my life. He also introduced me to Julia Kristeva and Georg Lukács, two theorists who changed my life and underlie my thesis.

I would like to further thank and dedicate this thesis to the professors who greatly impacted me during my time at UCLA. It was in the lecture halls here that I learned, as Milton said, learning makes people happier than ignorance. To Professor Harren, thank you for transforming my life by defining the artist. To Professor Ardam, my first English professor, thank you for showing me that Gertrude Stein's repetition of the word wandering adds to and reduces its meaning; it convinced me to pursue the English major. To Professor Jager, from whom I first heard Satan's epic speech, thank you for teaching me the aural power of poetic creation.

To Professor Makdisi, thank you for introducing me to William Blake; his greatness is without words. To Professor Shuger, my first Milton teacher, thank you for teaching me that freedom does not mean doing anything one wants, but freely choosing to do what is right. To Professor Huehls, my theory teacher, thank you for showing me the polyvalent beauty of aesthetic theory.

To Professor Dimuro, thank you for revealing the power behind novels, how they can paint the self as both an individual and a part of a universal whole. To Professor Normore, thank you for teaching me how substances can be good without being substantial goods. And to Professor Soni, thank you for reminding me why I love East and dread West.

Finally, thank you John Milton and Electronic Dance Music (a genre which I think Milton would have lost his mind over). More so than the other literature, art, and music I experienced in college, you both saved my life, making me feel like something. To Milton especially, my thesis is the only justification I have for these four years, and I hope it will bring you some form of glory.

All errors in this thesis are my own.

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Introduction

*If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.
William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

*Perception is (or at least can be, ought to be) the same as revelation.
Aldous Huxley, Heaven and Hell*

*All is, if I have grace to use it so
As ever in my great-task master's eye.
John Milton, How Soon Hath Time*

Seeing, it seems, is indelibly aligned with knowing. The very act of seeing suggests a penetration of reality, in order to dig out information from surfaces. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, since the sixteenth century, “knowledge” is one of sight’s connotations (sight, n.12). As an example, in one of Mary Montagu’s letters (1721) about a Scottish woman who could care less about social exile, Montagu writes “I see no very lively reasons why she should;” “know” can be substituted for “see” (see, v.3). Hearing, however, does not initially evoke active knowledge acquisition; instead, this sense implies passivity, obedience, or feeling. Therefore, to learn and know about the world, sight appears to supersede sound. Yet, hearing does have a connection with knowledge: understanding. In *The History of Tom Jones*, one of its characters exclaims “I desire only to be heard out;” “understood” is a synonym for “heard out” (hear, v.4). In this sense, hearing or listening implies empathy with alterity.¹ Aldous Huxley claims that the difference between knowledge and understanding parallels, respectively, the external and internal truths of an object.² Knowledge is “knowing” an object by its appearance,

¹ Among both musicologists and philosophers, there is much debate over which connotes more activeness: hearing or listening. For my paper, I will use them interchangeably to connote activity, unless specified to denote passivity such as when I introduce regressive listening.

² Huxley’s claim comes from a lecture he gave at the Vedanta Society of Southern California's Hollywood Temple in 1955.

whereas understanding is “knowing” an object by stepping into its skin and empathizing with its internal movements.

On a surface reading, John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, a retelling of the Adam and Eve story, seems to gender seeing and hearing as, respectively, masculine and feminine, preferring the former for its connection with rationality and knowledge.³ This reading is emphasized by the fact that Milton wrote his poem amidst the English Scientific Revolution, the dawn of the Enlightenment period, when reason and objective observation were considered indispensable tools for learning about the universe, when only men were allowed to publicly practice science. Furthermore, the poem seemingly demonizes hearing and femininity. The poem’s climax centers on an act of hearing; Eve eats the fruit of knowledge after listening to Satan in the guise of a serpent. By eating the fruit, Eve causes the first human pair to lose the paradisiacal garden of Eden, introducing humanity to the fallen world of sin, evil, and death.

However, *Paradise Lost* does not actually favor the eye over the ear. Milton’s poem favors neither. Not only was Milton blind when he wrote the poem, fully aware of how sight can be imperfect, his poem also represents the first pair, before and after the fall, abusing both seeing and hearing. When used improperly, the two senses atomize Adam and Eve, blinding them from their connection to each other and God’s creation, deafening them from each other’s calls for connubial support. Moreover, if the poem did espouse sight as a better faculty, this would arbitrarily restrict what Milton tenaciously supports: free will, confining individuals to rely on

³ There are two editions of *Paradise Lost*, the first published in 1667 and the second in 1674. The one I use is edited by Merritt Hughes, who translates the second edition found in the Folger Shakespeare Library. Hughes himself admits this version is not “a scholar’s text, but it is not [an] untrustworthy one for many scholarly purposes” (Milton vii). Hughes’ notes have been invaluable to me, connecting many dots I would not have known or understood. The other Milton works I draw on in my thesis are also edited by Hughes.

one sense in learning about God and the universe. What then does *Paradise Lost* advocate instead of seeing and hearing as means to acquire knowledge and understanding? Deconstructing the gendered dichotomy between seeing and hearing, as well as the one between knowledge and understanding, Milton's poem invokes the imagination, which can help individuals perceive and experience divine revelations.

Milton's imagination is not separate from seeing and hearing. Milton's imagination is a kinesthetic, swerving, and wandering faculty, connecting the senses by moving between them. Kinesthesia, as opposed to synesthesia, is the feeling of "motion" (kinaesthesia, n.), meaning the imagination, for Milton, is cognitive movement which perceives and adapts to the eternally changing universe. Seeing and hearing are therefore imperfect when they are used statically, without attempting to move or imagine beyond superficial perceptions. In this sense, both sight and sound have potential for higher usage: unveiling knowledge and understanding behind surfaces. A cogent example is Galileo Galilei's scientific discoveries. Galileo famously confirmed Nicholas Copernicus' model of a sun-centered universe, finding spots on the sun with his self-made telescope. Milton visited Galileo, who was on house arrest and "a prisoner to the Inquisition" as the poet states in *Areopagitica* (738). While their discussion is absent from history, Milton backed Galileo's "thinking in astronomy" for how he revealed that not even the sun is merely as it seems, an important and necessary revelation (738).⁴

In my thesis, I first argue that *Paradise Lost*, on its surface, genders seeing and hearing in-line with *Genesis*, as well as with Milton's classical, theological and contemporary traditions. Yet, the poem also demonstrates that gendering these two senses does not prohibit either sex

⁴ See Gillian Daw's "Dark with Excessive Light': Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the Nineteenth-Century Astronomical Imagination" for more on Milton and Galileo's connection.

from abusing seeing and hearing. Rejecting the singular confinement of the senses, Milton's poem champions cognitive liberty via the imagination, as Milton frames in his seventh Prologue: "contemplation...is the only means whereby the mind can set itself free from the support of the body and concentrate its powers for the unbelievable delight of participating in the life of immortal gods" (623). Milton's imagination engenders a moving and contemplative mindset, unlocking perception of the unseen and inaudible. In a larger sense, I claim that the poetic speaker's attempt to "assert Eternal Providence" and "justify the ways of God to men" mirrors a patent vindication for seeing as God does (*PL* I. 25-26). That is, Milton's poem urges we see with an eternal perspective, seeing and knowing each thing as infinitely complex. Justifying "the ways of God to men" necessarily also entails a justification of Eve, however latent it may be. While on the veneer listening and succumbing to Satan's temptation connotes a moral swerve from the regime of rationality, Eve hears and follows her unconscious in-line with God's universal will, acquiring subjective agency and consciousness. Moreover, her hearing teaches her to embrace the other as a part of her self-identity; it also reveals retrospection's revelatory power.

Seeing and Hearing's Gendering and Abuse in *Paradise Lost*

Milton's source text, *Genesis*, suggests seeing is an exalted, masculinized sense whereas feminine listening causes humanity's fall, mirrored in the surface characterizations of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*.⁵ In *Genesis*, as in Milton's poem, God makes Adam first. God then forms the animals, bringing them to Adam "to *see* what he would call them;" whatever he calls them is their "name thereof" (*KJV*, Gen. 2.19, my italics). Once the biblical Adam sees Eve, made from one of his ribs, he says "this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," calling her "woman, because she was taken out of man" (*KJV*, Gen. 2.23). Milton's account differs slightly because Adam begins his exclamation with "I now see," adding "my self/Before me" (*PL* VIII. 494-9). Milton's poem further emphasizes Adam's sight when he is introduced; his "eye sublime" declares "absolute rule" over Eve and Eden (*PL* IV. 300-1). Departing from *Genesis*, the poem's final two books center on visions of futurity directly imparted onto Adam's eyes. By contrast, the biblical Eve's introductory act is listening to the serpent state "hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (*KJV*, Gen. 3.1). While Milton's Eve is introduced long before she hears a talking snake, in the opening conversation between Adam and Eve, Adam first speaks to Eve, who gives "him all ear to hear" (*PL* IV. 410). Eve is also aligned with hearing when she experiences a nightmare caused by Satan whispering into ear, and when Adam vituperates Eve for giving "ear" to the serpent, correlating hearing to depravity (*PL* IX. 1067).

In addition to the precedent established in *Genesis*, there is a classical tradition that implicitly genders sight as a masculine mode of acquiring knowledge. This classical tradition is reflected in Milton's characterization of the sun and his representation of the serpent's oratory

⁵ Hannibal Hamlin confirms that while Milton knew the Bible in many translations and versions, for his major works, he tends to adopt the King James Version.

style. Within his allegory of the cave, Plato claims that the sun is “the source and provider of truth and knowledge,” implying the sun’s light elucidates the ideal and invisible Forms.⁶ While Plato does not explicitly masculinize the sun, Milton’s speaker suggests the “great luminary” in the sky, akin to God’s “eye,” “warms” the earth with “gentle penetration” and “unseen/Shoots invisible virtue” (*PL* III. 586). The sun’s masculinized beams illumine virtuous truth, echoing Plato’s conception of the Forms. Augustine of Hippo also equates God with light, suggesting true knowledge and happiness occurs when people see glimpses of God through scripture or out in the physical world.⁷ Again, while Augustine does not explicitly masculinize sight, both he and Milton figure the sun in contrast to a feminine earth (*PL* VII. 358-62).⁸ Finally, Cicero declares that “the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight” (Dobranski 10), arguing that the best kind of oratory style emulates seeing, since language that creates visual, mental images is more easily received and comprehended by an audience’s ears.⁹ The temptation scene portrays the serpent as an “orator” (*PL* IX. 670), who tempts Eve’s ear with visions of becoming God-like, thereby masculinizing sight and feminizing hearing.

Complementing this tradition in which sight is masculine, early philosophical and theological works gender hearing as feminine, the latter because of Eve’s parallel to the Virgin Mary, who Milton characterizes as “second Eve” (*PL* V. 387). One of the earliest texts that genders sound is Aristotle’s *Physiognomics*, which feminizes high-pitched noises and

⁶ Quote taken from Plato’s *The Republic* Book VII (63).

⁷ These ideas are found in Augustine’s *Confessions*.

⁸ See Martha Lifson’s article “Creation and the Self in *Paradise Lost* and the *Confessions*” for more on Milton and Augustine’s similarities.

⁹ As Cicero writes in *De Oratore*, translated by E.W. Sutton.

masculinizes deep tones, favoring the latter.¹⁰ Milton criticizes Aristotle's ideas about sound in his second Prolusion.¹¹ The most pertinent connection between hearing and femininity, however, comes from the Neoplatonist Proclus, whom Milton relies on for the sun's description in Raphael's account of creation.¹² Proclus interprets the Annunciation, when the Virgin Mary conceives Christ after a visit from the angel Gabriel, as a result of God's divine Word "leaping in through Mary's sense of hearing" (Constas 280). Proclus, as well as other theologians of late antiquity and the medieval period, theorized Mary's impregnation through sound as a typological double to Eve's sexualized encounter with the serpent. For example, Proclus claims Eve's ear embodies "the door of sin" in contrast to Mary's as the "gate of salvation" (Constas 283). Milton, who drew off such sources, emblemizes the serpent's insemination of disobedience with "in her ears the sound/Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn'd/With reason" (*PL IX*. 736-38).¹³

Sight and sound were also gendered in Milton's historical moment. The English Royal Society's formation in 1660 established an Adamic, ocular privilege in the public sphere of England's scientific work.¹⁴ Milton not only knew some of the Royal Society's leading

¹⁰ See Ann Carson's "The Gender of Sound" in *Glass, Irony and God* (119).

¹¹ Specifically, Milton upbraids Aristotle for rebuking Pythagoras' idea of divine harmony, just because the philosopher cannot hear the inaudible tune.

¹² "Two Milton Notes" marks that Raphael draws on Proclus' commentary of Plato's *Timaeus*.

¹³ See Nicholas Constas' "The Ear of the Virginal Body: the Poetics of Sound in the school of Proclus" for how Milton incorporates these classical and theological thinkers (284).

¹⁴ In *Love, Power, and Knowledge*, Hilary Rose suggests the Royal Society's aim was to acquire "new masculine knowledge," because Francis Bacon used rape to describe how scientists discover nature by "[wresting] her secrets from her" (44). She marks that it was not until 1943 when women were finally elected into the group.

members, but Henry Oldenburg, one of Milton's teachers, was also its first secretary.¹⁵ The Royal Society was founded on Francis Bacon's new scientific method: repeating observations to acquire knowledge about nature. Desiring to supersede fallen, individual perspective, the Royal Society emphasized collective experimentation and objectivity to attain an "innocent eye," akin to that of prelapsarian Adam, who modeled a pure and industrious work ethic.¹⁶ With the invention of the telescope and microscope, the Royal Society further aligned its social body with Adam's objective vision, bringing distant objects closer to their eyes and finding more avenues to glorify God's unseen ways. Joanna Picciotto avers that Milton's Adam best typifies the Royal Society's goals, while she looks unfavorably on Eve, who embodies individualism and "corporate productivity" (476). Yet, by suggesting Milton's Eve is not evocative of Royal Society's ideals, Picciotto underscores that Milton knew the scientific union barred women from joining in his time. Ruth Watts notes how the Royal Society viewed empirical science, making and testing observations, as a primarily masculine activity, Bacon himself declaring that any scientific government of women is an "error of nature" (83).¹⁷ While aristocratic women were allowed to use microscopes and telescopes at home, to educate them of God's glory, women's scientific work was limited to the domestic sphere, restricting their practice of science to conversations they had with each other and their husbands (Watts 85).

¹⁵ Angelica Duran's *The Age of Milton and the Scientific Revolution* explains Milton's connection to the Royal Society.

¹⁶ See Joanna Picciotto's *Labors of Innocence* (1).

¹⁷ See Watts' "Gender, Science and Modernity in Seventeenth-Century England" for more on how the Royal Society was masculinized in connection to England's rampant witch-hunt trials.

While seeing and hearing seem gendered in Milton's world, and even in his poem, Milton resists this dichotomy by emphasizing the mind's fallen nature, rather than claiming the senses themselves are intrinsically imperfect or exclusively defined to sex. Although Milton does not offer an explicit statement of his views on the mind and senses, I claim they echo those of Lucretius, the Epicurean philosopher who Milton invokes throughout his poem, alluding to Lucretius' theory of sight in Book XI.¹⁸ In *De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things)*, Lucretius' speaker declares that "our eyeballs" cannot know the "nature of reality," that false perceptions of the world are not because of any "fault" of "sight," but that of the "mind" (*DRN* IV. 387-89). He similarly implies that hearing is not to blame for deceptions; even though sounds can be distorted in space, ultimately the mind is responsible for erroneous conclusions. Miltonists have often considered the extent to which the notion of the fallen mind implicates *Paradise Lost's* readers. Stanley Fish begins his *Surprised by Sin: The Reader of Paradise Lost* with a section entitled "The Defect of our Hearers;" he never suggests there is anything innately wrong about the sense of hearing; he merely argues that the readers of Milton's poem have fallen cognitive faculties, continually reminded of their imperfect ways whenever they sympathize with Satan or fail to have God-like logic. Somewhat of a response to Fish's book, Victoria Silver's *Imperfect Sense* likewise suggests the reader's mind is tragically fallen, unable to accept God's incongruous nature because of language's inability to accurately describe him. Unlike Fish, Silver does not think, nor believes that Milton thinks, of the reader as incorrigible. She claims the mind can save its faith in God by adjusting its point of view, acknowledging that incongruity describes God more fruitfully than simplicity. As an example, Silver explicates how Milton's theology, building off Martin Luther and John Calvin's, is like a labyrinth: knowing,

¹⁸ I will later show Lucretius' materialist presence in Milton's monism and aesthetics.

understanding and experiencing God comes not at the maze's center, an impossible endpoint, but in its sharp twists and turns. In this sense, the mind, for Milton, is imperfect, but it can be redeemed by embracing, not resisting, God's incongruous nature.

While for Milton the mind is fallen, rather than the senses, *Paradise Lost* nonetheless suggests that seeing and hearing can be abused. In terms of sight, Milton's poem critiques sight as a tool of objectification: when individuals see and objectify things as static objects, whose identities can be determined through reasonable observation. Sight's abuse occurs often with Adam, most conspicuously when his rational methodology mistakenly objectifies the source of Eve's dream. After Eve finishes relating her diabolical dream, Adam speculates at its evil origin, unaware Satan imbues it into her. He hypothesizes that "in the soul/Are many lesser faculties that serve/Reason as chief, among these fancy," who forms "imagination" by "joining or disjoining" perceptions of reality, producing "wild work...in dreams" (*PL* V. 100-12). In other words, Adam posits that Eve's evil dream is a product of her imagination, set loose while reason, her exalted faculty, is dormant. Susan James critiques Adam for dismissing Eve's vision "as something cooked up by the lesser faculties of Eve's soul," missing both the warning and potential for "Satan's devilish art to affect Eve" (115).¹⁹ Silver adds that Adam fails to see how evil is the delusion of "thinking we grasp...[an] image" (338). I concur with both these scholars, but I would like to point out that this is not one naïve error on Adam's part but a reoccurring pattern.

In fetishizing reason and denigrating fancy, so as to sweep Eve's dream under the rug, Adam typifies Georg Lukács' theory of reification, which suggests that rational observation and

¹⁹ In "Uncertain Knowing, Blind Vision and Active Passivity: Subjectivity, Sensuality and Emotion in Milton's Epistemology," James argues that Milton thought of subjective sensory experience as a legitimate, though not sufficient, form of knowledge.

calculation leads to the objectification of subjects.²⁰ While Lukács fashions his theory in relation to industrialized society, Adam's rationale echoes reification because Adam celebrates and uses reason to rationalize the source of Eve's dream: to quench, inadequately, Eve's misgivings. Employing and preempting reason, Adam ignores how dreams can come from good or evil supernatural sources.²¹ Adam ostensibly reassures Eve by telling her "evil into the mind of God or man/May come and go," leaving "no spot or blame behind" (*PL* V. 117-19). However, Adam erroneously presupposes that Eve worries more about her soul's state than she is genuinely afraid. Moreover, Adam asks Eve to not be "disheart'n'd" and renew "those looks/That wont to be more cheerful and serene" (*PL* V. 122-23). In order for paradise to resume its prepossessing normalcy, Adam essentially tells Eve to forget about her dream and resume her "cheerful" looks as if nothing has happened, objectifying her role in Eden as a serene, pleasant-to-look-at model. Apparently, Eve is "cheer'd,/But silently a gentle tear let fall," and "two other precious drops that...[Adam] ere they fell/Kiss'd as the gracious signs of sweet remorse/And pious awe that fear'd to have offended" (*PL* V. 129-35). Adam objectifies Eve's tears as "signs" of her holiness, which "fear'd to have offended," but Eve's silence signifies that they abound with her own unclear fear, undercutting Adam's rationale observation.

Adam's objectified view of Eve and Eden can be traced to his conception. When he first awakes, Adam mistakenly literalizes God's prohibition against the tree of knowledge. After Adam first wakes up, exploring his new environment with "wondering eyes" (*PL* VIII. 257), God informs Adam of the "pledge of [his] obedience...his sole command" to not eat from the

²⁰ See Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" (96-98).

²¹ Manfred Weidhorn, in his book *Dreams in Seventeenth-Century English Literature*, writes that the Bible portrays how dreams can come from God, angels, or demons.

tree of “knowledge of good and ill;” if he eats it, he “shalt die,” becoming “mortal” and losing his “happy state” (*PL VIII*. 325-31). “Pledge” means “something deposited...as guarantee of good faith, and liable to forfeiture in case of failure” (pledge, n.1). It therefore connotes an immaterial transaction; God is telling Adam that the tree represents the obedience he pays to receive the happiness of knowing only good, thereby living immortally in a “happy state” of mind. God is not telling Adam he will physically die the moment he eats the fruit, but that he will “inevitably” terminate his contract of obedience for Edenic happiness, making him cognizant of his corporeal mortality (*PL VIII*. 330). Yet, Adam implicitly literalizes the consequence of God’s warning as entailing immediate physical death, characterizing God’s speech with “sternly” and “rigid” (*PL VIII*. 333-34). These modifiers indicate stasis when God is describing Adam’s mutable position. Adam objectifies God’s adjuration because his nature seems to be endowed with such literalizing capabilities. When Adam sees animals pass by, he names them because he understands “thir nature” (*PL VIII*. 353-54), as Milton describes it in *Christian Doctrine*, an “extraordinary wisdom” which God gives to the first man (982).

However, Milton’s poem makes it clear that this knowledge applies exclusively to his naming of the animals, not in his objectification of God’s command nor Eve’s identity. When Adam pleads for an equal partner to converse with, God assents to create his “other self, exactly to [his] heart’s desire,” opening Adam’s “inner sight” to make Eve (*PL VIII*. 450-51, 461). As he sees Eve, Adam first fixates on her fair “looks,” exclaiming “I now see/Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, my self/Before me: woman is her name, of man/Extracted” (*PL VIII*. 474, 494-98). Adam’s “I now see” underscores and undermines his patent objectification of Eve. Larry Langford suggests “Adam speaks the literal truth, in that Eve was indeed created from his bone and flesh,” but he errs in equating Eve with himself when God clearly says she will be his

differential, “other self.”²² Adam assumes, like the meaning of “woman,” Eve is his fantasized and objectified product, whose identity is entirely dependent on and synonymous with his.²³ In reality, Eve is a wholly different but equal creation of God. Although God creates Eve out of Adam’s wish for someone else to talk to, Adam first leads her to a bower where they have sex, emphasizing Adam’s libidinous desires and his failure to make her soul’s content most desirable.

By overly trusting sight’s objectifying function and its ability to “know” good or evil, Adam mistakenly believes physical surveillance, constantly watching for deception, can help the first pair eschew temptation. He thereby ironically restricts Eve’s faith in God when she faces the serpent. Wilma Armstrong claims that surveillance in Eden is first proven fallible by Uriel, the “sharpest-sighted spirit of all in heav’n” (*PL* III. 692), allowing Satan disguised as a cherub to enter the garden.²⁴ She implies Uriel is exonerated from letting Satan enter paradise because “goodness thinks no ill/Where no ill seems,” especially when “hypocrisy” is “the only evil that walks/Invisible” (*PL* III. 688-89, 683-84), suggesting that looking *too* closely at surfaces is not evocative of holy sightedness. However, Armstrong does not comment on how prelapsarian Adam invokes surveillance before Eve leaves to work by herself. In contrast to Uriel, Adam relies excessively on what he can see, demonstrating how he views surveillance as a tool of control. When Eve raises doubts over how much trust Adam has in her, Adam replies “not diffident of thee do I dissuade/Thy absence from my sight, but to avoid/Th’attempt itself,” because “the enemy...will hardly dare” approaching them together, or “first on [him] th’assault

²² See Langford’s “Adam and the Subversion of Paradise” (130).

²³ This idea of a fantasizing, objectifying male gaze is based on Lauren Mulvey’s *Visual and Other Pleasures*.

²⁴ See Armstrong’s article “Punishment, Surveillance, and Discipline in *Paradise Lost*” for more on how Milton treats surveillance and internal monitoring as forms of self-discipline.

shall light" (*PL IX*. 293-305). Adam muddles his confidence in Eve by claiming that, under his watch, the tempter would not dare approaching them, or if he does, he will be rebutted by Adam's ability to see through dissimulation. Adam does not see that his overconfidence in his sight sequesters him from Eve, objectifying her ability by virtue of her lesser "outward strength" (*PL IX*. 312). When Eve declares she wants to test her own strength, Adam reminds her that her "reason" may "fall" by "specious object," unless she keeps "strictest watch, as she [is] warn'd," counseling her to "go," "rely/On" and "summon all" her "virtue" (*PL IX*. 361-363, 372-374). Adam errs here because he equates reason with her virtue. Obedience to God is not rigorously and rationally looking at every turn for evil, but believing in and using internal sight, faith, to know God will help in times of need. Assaying to control their continued happiness in paradise, Adam jeopardizes it by hyper-controlling Eve's plan of action, fettering her with the fear of not seeing correctly, rather than empowering her with faith in the unseen.

In regards to hearing's abuse, Milton's poem critiques regressive listening, defined as listening for singular, pleasant-sounding ideas.²⁵ Milton's speaker calls for his hearers to be receptive and concentrated, implying regressive listening blocks individuals from perceiving divine truths. At the beginning of book VII, Milton's speaker asks his muse Urania to "govern" his "song" and find a "fit audience...though few," driving away any "barbarous dissonance," such as that from Bacchus' worshippers who silenced and "tore" Orpheus, whose songs brought rocks and trees to life (*PL VII*. 30-36).²⁶ Because his "fit" hearers will be "few," Milton's

²⁵ My definition of regressive listening is based off of Theodore Adorno's "On the Fetish-Character in Music and Regression in Listening." Adorno analogizes regressive listening to a child in a candy store, enjoying only sweet noises and shunning that which is unsavory.

²⁶ "Govern" in Milton's time had connotations of determining the "nature or key of (a piece of music)" (govern, v.14).

speaker stresses that his song will not be received by regressive listeners. Alluding to how Orpheus is “torn apart” at death (Kiel, “Orpheus”), Milton’s speaker indicates that his song is not like the incongruous music of Bacchus’ inebriated followers, who are obsessed with audible pleasure (Auffahrt, “Dionysus [Bacchus]”), but that it is as congruous as Orpheus’ harmonies, since his “mortal voice” is raised by “heav’nly” power (*PL VII. 24, 39*). In achieving celestial consonance, the speaker’s style will not be received by those who seek mellifluous clarity. Eschewing his words as unmelodious or harsh, such readers are unable or unwilling to synthesize its jarring parts into a whole, a pleasurable process capable of unlocking revelatory knowledge.

Milton’s speaker diagrams how Adam and Eve succumb to their personal aural preferences, practicing regressive listening and failing to see how dissonance can buttress their relationship. After Raphael relates Satan’s “apostasy” and the war that ensues from it, Adam “was fill’d/With admiration...to hear/Of things so high and strange” (*PL VII. 51-53*). The speaker implies Raphael’s moral is that evil redounds on those produce it, causing Adam to suppress “the doubts that in his heart arose” (*PL VII. 60*). Adam’s “doubts” are never made clear; I posit that the war in heaven, itself an irony, evokes his growingly discordant marriage, effected by Eve’s dream. Instead of revealing his qualms, Adam represses them and “led on...with desire to know” how the universe was formed, “as one whose drouth,” or thirst (Milton 347), is satisfied yet “still eyes the current stream,/Whose liquid murmur heard new thirst excites” (*PL VII. 61-77*). By comparing Adam’s desire for more storytelling to one whose thirst has just been sated, Milton’s speaker demonstrates how Adam practices regressive listening: gluttonously seeking to hear pleasant words rather than pragmatic ones. Raphael grants his request, but he reminds him that “knowledge is as food” and needs “temperance” (*PL VII. 126-27*). However, Raphael’s advice is actually detrimental because Adam thirsts for knowledge that

does not directly help his life in Eden. Once Raphael finishes the story, Adam asks for more, ignoring the angel's monition to temper himself. Eve "perceiving" that they are entering on "studious thoughts abstruse," excuses herself (*PL VIII*. 40-41). Milton's speaker avouches that this is not because Eve's ear is "not capable...of what was high," or that she does not derive delight from such talks, but she reserves this "pleasure" for when she is with Adam, who intersperses his talks with "caresses" and "digressions" (*PL VII*. 49-57). On the one hand, as Milton's speaker introjects, such desire for "love and mutual honor" is commendable (*PL VII*. 58). On the other, Eve portrays regressive listening by selectively choosing what she wants to hear. Additionally, Eve does not voice why she is leaving, keeping her thoughts hidden. In her silence, Eve's departure makes "all" of the garden's "eyes...wish her still in sight," suggesting her self-imposed absence causes further latent discord in paradise (*PL VII*. 63).

In addition to regressive listening, Elizabeth Fuller discusses how Adam and Eve practice surface listening, concentrating on the explicit content of what the other says, disregarding each other's veiled fears.²⁷ Because of the garden's "wanton growth," Eve asks Adam to "advise/or hear" her "thoughts:" "let us divide our labors, thou where choice/Leads thee, or where most needs" (*PL IX*. 208-23). Fuller writes that Eve is not saying they should divide their labors, "but that they should perhaps divide their labors because she fears...the 'wantonness' of paradise" (171). Eavesdropping on Raphael and Adam's earlier conversation, Eve hears how Raphael admonishes Adam to love what is "higher" in her, rather than her appearance (*PL VIII*. 586). Highlighting Eden's unkempt state, Eve demonstrates her "higher" industrious self, while also pleading for Adam's conjugal support (Fuller 171). Implicitly, Eve connects herself to the garden

²⁷ My discussion follows a chapter in Fuller's *Milton's Kinesthetic Vision in Paradise Lost*, which I will elaborate on more when I consider Milton's aesthetics.

when she describes it as “wanton,” since her hair carries the same modifier when she is first introduced (*PL* IV. 306). Eve’s idea to work separately is thus a covert message; she asks Adam to care for her more attentively, or else she will search for self-satisfaction elsewhere. Although Eve obfuscates her petition with “poetic meaning,” Adam is inattentive in his hearing, focusing on the “most obvious of her ‘thoughts:’” the division of their labor (Fuller 173). Adam flouts Raphael’s warning and praises her “looks” and “smiles” (*PL* IX. 239). Furthermore, he doubts that his wife is strong enough to descry a “sly assault” (*PL* IX. 256). Yet, Eve too concentrates on what she “expected not to hear,” declaring that Adam fears not their foe’s “violence,” which would have no effect on them, but “his fraud” and her “firmness” (*PL* IX. 279-85). Eve fails to recognize that both these fears are symptoms of Adam’s deeper insecurity, of losing his happy state. However, because Adam does not listen to and fulfill her latent emotional desires, she does not satisfy his. Surface listening therefore causes Adam and Eve to cloister themselves into solitary states, sequestering them and instigating the fall.

While seeing and hearing’s abuse can atomize individuals, Milton’s poem, as Silver argues, also accents how language complicates perceptions of reality and selfhood. Nowhere is this more evident than when Eve recounts her first moments of consciousness, looking at her image in a mirror of water. Scholars have read this scene as an allusion to Narcissus; others mark how Eve’s story reenacts Jacques Lacan’s “Mirror Stage” experiment, interpreting Eve’s act as a coming into self-consciousness in relation to Adam.²⁸ Another important dimension is God’s use

²⁸ James Earl’s “Eve’s Narcissism” suggests Adam finds the satisfaction of his desires in Eve, while Eve needs a baby to satisfy hers. Roberta Martin’s “How Came I Thus? Adam and Eve in the Mirror of the Other” touches on God’s narcissistic discourse. Both suggest Eve’s mirror scene sets up the psychological foundations for the fall.

of Lacanian Symbolic language, which is law-like, obscuring the way she perceives herself and the world. Upon Eve's fixation of herself, God declares

.....what thou seest,
 What there thou seest fair creature is thyself...
but follow me,
 And I will bring thee where no shadow stays
 Thy coming (PL IV. 467-71).

God misinforms Eve by stating her reflection is actually herself. The modified repetition from "what thou seest," to "what thou there seest is thyself" emphasizes God's authoritarian certainty. However, what Eve sees is not her *real* self; it is just an image. Furthermore, God informs her that where he is taking her to emits no shadows. While God speaks metaphorically, Eve literally wakes up "under a shade" and will first see Adam "under a platan" (PL IV. 478), meaning "plane tree" (Milton 289). God's figurative language therefore confuses Eve's perception of reality, creating a conflict between what she perceives and how it matches with her reality.

God's conflation of reflection and personhood, and of literal and figurative language, problematizes Eve's ability to know herself as both a subject and object. Before she meets Adam, God tells her

.....he
 Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy
 Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear
 Multitudes like thyself, and thence be call'd
 Mother of human race (PL IV. 471-75).

By predicating his clauses with “he” or “(to) him,” God minimizes “thou” and amplifies Eve’s role as Adam’s object. Even when he declares that she will “bear” multitudes of children, God objectifies Eve as a “mother” through the passive voice: “and thence be called.” Unlike Adam, who receives the task of naming all the animals when he awakes, Eve is named and objectified as a woman, exemplifying their sexual hierarchy in terms of language. Upon seeing Adam for the first time, she flees away in aversion, seeking her reflection which is visibly equal with herself. Were it not for Adam’s amorous poetry, Eve would not understand that her identity is dependent on his, that subjectivity is constituted by alterity,

.....return fair Eve,
 Whom fli’st thou? Whom thou fli’st, of him thou art,
 His flesh, his bone; to give thee being I lent
 Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart
 Substantial life, to have thee by my side...
 Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim
 My other half (*PL IV*, 483-89).

Giving her his rib nearest his “heart,” Adam reduces himself to an object so that Eve may have subjective “being,” making them one “soul.” Adam’s imaginative use of language, using repetition, variation, and a passionate pathos, corrects Eve’s self-understanding, assuring her that she is both a subject and object as himself.²⁹ In this sense, Adam’s poetry parallels how Milton’s poem undoes sensory abuse, how poetic language, incarnated via the imagination, can transform seeing and hearing into tools for revelation.

²⁹ As Silver writes, Adam and Eve forget their dependence on each other for self-identity by the temptation scene, due to their imperfect sense of God and his creation.

Redeeming Imperfect Seeing Through the Divine and Moving Imagination

Becoming completely blind in 1652, Milton had to contest against imperfect sight, overcoming his inability to see by entrusting his poetic abilities in the infinite God who guides his imagination.³⁰ While Milton saw his blindness as a direct result of his government work, straining his eyes under dim candlelight to write political treatises, his contemporaries deemed it a judgement from God, punishing the poet for his tracts on regicide and the legalization of divorce. Far from seeing his blindness as punishment, Milton describes how he is “consummated” through his darkened eyes, that “through this darkness should I be enrobed in light.”³¹ Recalling how Raphael recreates the universe’s creation, how God forms “light from darkness” (*PL VII. 250*), Milton’s phrasing suggests that his faith in God perfects his lack of sight, helping him write an epic poem which reveals divine truths. Milton trusts God due to his belief in an “educated imagination,” a fancy backed by reason, the “psychological mechanism by which we come to see and believe the evidence of things not seen.”³² As Stephen Dobranski points out, Milton’s imagination first represents God’s unseen truth when the speaker asks God’s light to “irradiate” his “mind” and “there plant eyes,” so that he may “see and tell/Of things invisible to mortal sight” (*PL III. 53-55*).³³ Dobranski claims that Milton’s speaker invokes his own theory of accommodation, a “translation of infinite truths for a finite understanding through

³⁰ My discussion on Milton’s blindness comes from Angelica Duran’s “The Blind Bard, According to John Milton and His Contemporaries,” whose ideas are reverberated in Silver’s chapter entitled “Milton’s Speaker.”

³¹ In Milton’s *The Second Defense of the People of England*, as cited by Silver (174).

³² This is Paul Steven’s argument in “Milton and the Icastic Imagination,” found in an endnote of Silver’s book (401).

³³ See Dobranski’s *Milton’s Visual Imagination* (1).

anthropomorphism,” or using poetry to form pictures of God’s immaterial, limitless knowledge (17). Milton’s speaker can only achieve this, however, by God enlightening his imagination. Depending on God’s unlimited and universal energy, Milton’s speaker demonstrates how William Blake says the “the doors of perception,” that is subjective senses, can be “cleansed” through the imagination, unveiling the universe “as it is, infinite.”

In the same invocation to God’s light, Milton’s speaker likens his poem to a moving mystical revelation, which transcends visions of good and evil. Milton conceptualizes *Paradise Lost* as a material entity with physical, changing effects rather than a static object. Milton’s speaker likens light to a “bright effluence of bright essence increate,” effusing out of and yet into the “dark and deep...formless infinite” (*PL III*. 6-12). Light’s moving nature parallels the speaker’s own movement out of hell and into heaven, as well as the revelatory enlightenment he entreats God to imbue within his darkened mind, so his poem may radiate spiritual luminescence. Emphasizing his “obscure sojourn” in “middle darkness,” where he sings of “chaos and eternal night,” Milton’s speaker equates his trip to hell with wandering alongside the “muses” under “shady grove,” or on a “sunny hill,/Smit with the love of sacred song” (*PL III*. 16-29). While he states “yet not the more/Cease I to wander” with the muses, the double negative makes it unclear whether he will stop representing evil (*PL III*. 27). Milton’s speaker, however, asserts that his “chief” desire is to “visit” light on the mountain of “Sion,” a biblical place of prophesy and revelation (*PL III*. 29-32). In imagining both hellish and heavenly visions, guided by divine sources, Milton’s speaker emblemizes Huxley’s claim that imaginative “perception” is akin to “revelation,” specifically revelations of hell, heaven, and the mystical. Milton’s speaker implies he wants his revelatory poem to transcend heaven and hell, into the mystical, correlating its verse to his “voluntary” modulation of “harmonious numbers” (*PL III*. 37-38). Sound’s oscillating

movement mirrors his varying representations of darkness and light throughout the poem, raising his poem above hellish or heavenly visions by moving between them. Because his “wisdom at one entrance [is] quite shut out,” unable to see the beauty and truth of the physical world, Milton’s speaker makes his poem kinesthetic, moving between his other senses to perceive and relate the unseen knowledge impregnated within him, such as hearing his voice and modulating it according to God’s will (*PL* III. 50). The speaker’s kinesthesia thus parallels his movement between light and darkness, good and evil revelation, embodying Milton’s aesthetic philosophy.

Despite the volume of work done on Milton’s aesthetics, Fuller’s analysis of his kinesthetic vision best informs my argument, delineating how both literal and figurative movement culminate in a meditative mindset, able to perceive and move with God’s Providence. The two foundational texts on Milton’s aesthetic methodology are Fish’s book and Geoffrey Hartman’s “Milton’s Counterplot.” Fish stresses the temporal limitations of Miltonic verse; Hartman argues that its subterranean counterplots unearth glimpses of Providence. Neither of these authors show how *Paradise Lost* moves contemporaneously in time *and* space. Fuller demonstrates that Milton’s poem shifts between multiple dimensions, not only in space-time but also in spiritual, rational, and emotional dimensions. According to Fuller, the poem’s kinesthetic vision, or the poem’s moving figures, disjoints and perplexes the reader’s mind. By defamiliarizing readers’ perspectives, aesthetically “distancing” them from habitual points of views, the reader’s mind is put into a state of motion, whereby “the reader will learn more of the forms of the universe” (Fuller 19-20). This cognitive motion leads to an imaginative, meditative mindset akin to the perspective of Providence, what she claims Adam and Eve learn by the poem’s conclusion. For readers, this providential point of view enables them to participate in the poem’s vicissitudes, instead of desiring to self-identify with the text (Fuller 105).

The importance of literal movement within *Paradise Lost* is embodied by its use of the multivalent word “wanton,” as Abigail Zitin discusses in her comparison of Milton’s poem with William Hogarth’s *Analysis of Beauty*.³⁴ Integral to Hogarth’s conception of the beautiful is the serpentine line, which winds and twists to set the eye on a riddle-like chase (52), using as his epigraphic example “so varied hee, of his tortuous train/Curl’d many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve,/To lure her eye” (*PL IX*. 516-18). Zitin claims the serpent’s “mazy wreaths” captivate indirection in Eve, stimulating her cognitive faculties to pursue the multi-directionality of its form (27). Yet, because Milton’s speaker uses the adjective “wanton,” connoting both an abandonment of oneself for sexual pleasure and an animation of movement within inanimate objects, he problematizes whether the serpent’s movement to tempt Eve should be considered beautiful, invoking the word’s fallen and innocent meanings. Moreover, Eve’s hair is described as curling into “wanton ringlets” (*PL IV*. 305), seemingly hyper-sexualizing Eve’s prelapsarian nakedness. Zitin, however, maintains that Milton’s speaker in both these cases invokes an anti-pun, which evokes but negates wanton’s sinful signification, underscoring the tracings and movements of objects rather than the psychological conditions of subjects (34). According to Zitin, Milton emphasizes the figural innocence of wantonness to conjunct aesthetic and erotic pleasure, arguing that Milton is an anticipation of Hogarth. Building off of her argument, I claim Milton also anticipates Immanuel Kant, because of how the poet champions a nonsexual, selfless mindset when contemplating beauty, regardless of whether objects are moving or still.

Although Milton and the secular philosopher Kant appear antagonistic, Milton’s aesthetics promote a selfless, freely moving mindset which Kant deems necessary for

³⁴ See “Wantonness: Milton, Hogarth, and *Analysis of Beauty*,” for more on Milton and Hogarth’s similarities.

experiencing beauty, exemplified in Eve's encounter with her own self-image. As I touched on with Fuller's kinesthetic vision, Milton's poem advocates a meditative state of mind, as opposed to one that desires for self-identification. Similarly, Kant asserts that, to experience the beautiful, subjective minds must be disinterested, whose eighteenth-century German meaning signifies a self without desire.³⁵ For both Milton and Kant, therefore, cognitive faculties must be free to play and move, unfettered by self-desire, to participate with beauty.³⁶ Further resonating with Milton, Kant supports a "free conformity to the law" (77), meaning the imagination acts freely in accordance with immanent laws, in Milton's case with God's Providence. When Eve first awakes and moves to the mirror of water, she sees "a shape...bending to look" on her (*PL IV*. 461-62), highlighting her lack of self-identity. Milton's speaker uses four clauses to imitate the reciprocal actions of Eve and her reflection: "I stared back,/it stared back, but pleas'd I soon return'd,/pleas'd it returned as soon," (*PL IV*. 462-64). The effects of the repetitions, variations, and enjambments mimic the affect of Eve's double-take: the pleasure of not knowing the identity of the moving and yet still shape. However, once the shape answers with "looks/Of sympathy and love," Eve empathizes with the image, pining with "with vain desire" and ceasing her selfless state of mind (*PL IV*. 464-66). Regardless, Eve chooses both instances of disinterested and erotic pleasure in harmony with God's implicit plan. God lets Eve freely experience her image so that she can understand herself in relation to Adam. Eve's mental shift also demonstrates cognitive swerving, which I argue undergirds Milton's aesthetic philosophy.

³⁵ From Kant's "Analytic of Beauty" within *Critique of Judgement*. The definition of "disinterested" is taken from *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

³⁶ Kant emphasizes the idea of purposiveness; that is, aesthetically pleasing objects should have no recognizable purpose. This is portrayed in Milton's poem when Eve eats from the tree of knowledge, stating that its "fair fruit" hangs "as to no end/Created" (*PL IX*. 798-99).

As scholars have studied, Milton's physics and his notion of monism, of God imbued within everything and everywhere, expands upon Lucretius' materialist philosophy.³⁷ I will focus on Milton's connection to Lucretius in terms of cognitive swerving, an idea the Epicurean philosopher uses to justify free will. Lucretius' speaker asserts that "all things exist with seed imperishable" intermixed with "void" (*DRN* I. 203-37), which for Milton means "all things proceed" from and are endued with God in "various forms" or "degrees" (*PL* VII. 470-73). Lucretius' speaker argues that all atoms would fall downwards "were it not their wont...to swerve" (*DRN* II. 222-23). This swerve, caused either by chance or by accident, underlines a universal inclination to move irregularly, enabling all things to move on their own accord. *De Rerum Natura* applies this swerve to cognition,

But that man's mind itself in all it does
 Hath not a fixed necessity within,
 Nor is not, like a conquered thing, compelled
 To bear and suffer, ---this state comes to man
 From that slight swervement of the elements
 In no fixed line of space, in no fixed time" (*DRN* II. 288-93).

This statement echoes Satan when he declares "the mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n" (*PL* I. 254-55). Milton's speaker alludes to innate, cognitive swerving within humans before God sends Raphael to advise the first pair, and before Adam leaves Eve to work on her own. God tells Raphael to inform Adam of his "own free will" and

³⁷ Phillip Hardie's "The Presence of Lucretius in *Paradise Lost*" notes 13 Lucretian allusions in Milton's poem. In his book *The Seeds of Things*, Jonathan Goldberg expands on Milton and Lucretius' interconnection in regard to the universe's formation and Milton's monism, deftly commenting on how Milton's angels embody Lucretian physics.

“warn him to beware/he swerve not too secure” (*PL* V. 230-38); Adam forewarns Eve to mind his advice because, although they have reason, it is still “possible to swerve” (*PL* IX. 358).

Foreshadowing humanity’s fall in both these scenes, God and Adam voice the mind’s ability to swerve. While cognitive swerving seemingly makes humans inherently flawed, the ability to wander off required course is what guarantees free will. While both God and Adam impute a negative connotation to cognitive swerving, the poem vindicates the necessity of such a mental wandering, embodied in Milton’s moving imagination and the picture of Eden’s river.

Critiquing the garden’s reputed perfection, Eden’s swerving river personifies and reflects the power of a wandering human imagination. Milton’s speaker describes the garden as a “woody theatre” filled with “trees loaden with fairest fruit...of golden hue” and “colors mixt” (*PL* IV. 141-49). The sun showers a light more resplendent than “in fair evening cloud” or in a rainbow (*PL* IV. 150), painting paradise with a *mélange* of shades and hues. And yet, Milton’s speaker underlines that this is how the landscape “seem’d” (*PL* IV. 154), distinguishing a lacuna between Eden’s theatrical appearance and its inherent nature. This gap is magnified when Milton’s speaker draws the large river that runs “southward” from Eden, dividing into four heads after passing a “darksome passage,” then “wand’ring many a famous realm...with mazy error” (*PL* IV. 223-239). As Hughes explains, “error has its Latin force of ‘wandering’” physically (Milton 283), which apparently absolves Eden from having “darksome” features. Fish adds that “error” lures readers into making wrong judgements about Eden’s perfect state (93). However, reducing “error” to “wandering” delimits Miltonic language into univocal functionality. Instead, the key word is “mazy,” which has two definitions in Milton’s period. The first is resembling a maze; the second, even older definition is a “state of bewilderment” (*mazy*, adj.1). In conjunction with “error” and “wandering,” which both signify literal and figural digression, *mazy*’s two

meanings mirror the aesthetic and psychological effects of the river. Eden's river looks like a maze, and, because of its bewildering lines, it moves eyes and minds. Mazy's duality thus undercuts the notion that "wandering" or "error" cannot denote cognitive deviation, because the river's moving physical surface makes the mind's eye swerve, like the poem's moving figures. This is not to say that Eden is not perfect; rather, its perfection is consummated by seemingly imperfect features. As I wrote earlier, Silver suggests that Milton's theology is exemplified as a labyrinth, rewarding at its incongruous turns rather than at its impossible-to-reach center. I claim that aesthetic enlightenment in *Paradise Lost* functions similarly. Milton's imaginative poem, as Eden's river, is like an intricate maze; by moving with it, the mind perceives pleasure and truth in its swerves rather than in "perfect" ideals of beauty.

Therefore, Milton urges individuals to use seeing and hearing in participation with the imagination: perceiving the universe's perpetual movement with their moving minds. In terms of sight, *Paradise Lost* celebrates vision that sees beyond the surface, observing and moving with God's unseen plan. Using God as a humanized model of imaginative sight, Milton's speaker espouses seeing with past, present, and future in mind, helping individuals live by faith. As Satan first flies into paradise, God the father bends his "eye" down into the garden, "wherein past, present, future he beholds" (*PL* III. 58, 78). He foresees that Adam and Eve will fall because of Satan's temptation, maintaining "freely they...fell;" neither "predestination" nor "foreknowledge" has any influence on their choice (*PL* III. 102, 114-18). In other words, God watching the fall in the future does not make Adam and Eve eat the fruit, like how gazing at a sunset does not cause the sun to set. God is thus exonerated from blame for the first pair's fall. Yet, God is callous in his absolution of himself, calling "man" an "ingrate" for falling (*PL* III. 93, 97). However, according to Silver, Milton does not claim this figure represents the true God;

he is a mouth-piece to the hidden, infinite God. Silver suggests this anthropomorphic God appears unfeeling so that readers suffer with his initial representation, overcoming it when they realize he is just a persona. But by humanizing God, Milton also implies humans can achieve God's eternal perspective. For example, in "How Soon Hath Time," Milton's speaker frets over turning 23. Even though he is wise, he yet has any works to evince his worth as a poet. He surpasses his worries when he realizes "all is, if I have grace to use it so/As ever in my great task-master's eye" (*HSHT*. 13-14). Although only God can see all things for all of time, Milton's speaker implies he can, "if" he does so graciously, view his life from God's vantage. He can know that his unknowable destiny is already laid out in eternity, and all he has to do to attain that impenetrable "lot" is by following the wills of "time" and God (*HSHT*. 11-12). Instead of worrying over his past, current, or future state, Milton's speaker can have faith in God and eternity, empowering him to accomplish all that he must. While only God can see omnisciently, Milton suggests we too can see time and space as one eternal fabric, unshackling ourselves from subjective lenses which blind us, as Adam learns at the end of *Paradise Lost*.

Though both Adam and Eve are partially blinded by eating the forbidden fruit, Michael underscores that the first man's eyes need more care because of his tendency to objectify via sight. When Michael meets the first pair, he puts Eve to sleep by drenching "her eyes" with the same foresight he is about to impart onto Adam, leading him up a hill with "clearest ken" (*PL* XI. 367, 379), or "range of sight" (ken, n.2). While Michael will expand both Adam and Eve's visions, Eve's expansion occurs during her dreams and Adam's whilst awake, suggesting Eve can learn unconsciously and Adam must be taught with his eyes wide open. This could be because Eve is more in-tune with her intuition; yet, Adam continually blunders because he fetishizes vision, portraying how his sight must be consciously illumined by divine intervention:

Michael from Adam's eyes the film remov'd
 Which that false fruit that promis'd clearer sight
 Had bred: then purg'd with euphrasy and rue
 The visual nerve, for he had much to see;
 And from the well of life three drops instill'd.
 So deep the power of these ingredients pierc'd,
 Ev'n to the inmost seat of mental sight,
 That Adam now enforc't to close his eyes,
 Sunk down and all his spirits became intrans (PL XI. 412-420).

The "film" alludes to Lucretius' theory of seeing, positing that each thing emits a thin coating which enters the mind through the eyes. In Adam's case, the fruit of knowledge releases a film that promises better vision, but ends up further corrupting Adam's sight. Upon eating it, Adam tells Eve that he "now" sees she has wisdom beyond her looks (PL IX. 1016). However, when he becomes cognizant of his shame, Adam defines Eve as embodying evil, wherefore Michael purges his "visual nerve." Michael uses "euphrasy and rues," herbs that were known in Milton's time for increasing sight's ability, and "life" or God's light (442), conflating material and immaterial cures to remedy Adam's vision. The "three drops...of life" also recall the "drop serene" that blinds Milton's speaker (PL III. 25); unlike the speaker, Adam needs these drops to open his "mental sight," so he can literally and figuratively "see" what Michael has to teach him. Michael's medicine is so powerful that Adam lays entranced, like the demons before they are revived by Satan's call (PL I. 302). In contrast to those demonic angels, Adam's entrancement signals his rebirth by Michael's teachings, which will make him a better seer and man.

Michael's critique of Adam's vision is threefold. First, the archangel shows the first man he must see beyond superficial appearances, in favor of unseen context and beauty. Second, Michael admonishes Adam not to objectify Eve. Third, he teaches Adam to see with an eternal perspective. Michael's methodology uses narrative devices, such as suspense, to unveil the figurative power latent in surfaces. When Michael shows Adam the story of the flood, Adam first sees animal pairs seek refuge in Noah's ark. In nondescript fashion, Michael turns from the biblical story to Ovid's account of the Deucalion flood, painting the wreckage of a "floating vessel," which, to Adam, looks like "the end of all [his] offspring" (*PL XI*. 745-55). Adam cries,

.....better had I
 Liv'd ignorant of future, so had borne
 My part of evil only.....
 The burd'n of many ages, on me light
 At once, by my foreknowledge gaining birth
 Abortive, to torment me ere thir being,
Let no man seek
 Henceforth to be foretold what shall befall
 Him, or his children, evil he may be sure,
 Which....his foreknowledge can prevent (*PL XI*. 763-71).

At first, Adam's despair is self-centered; he yearns for ignorance because this "evil" image reminds him of his lost paradise. However, Adam then portrays that his sadness results from knowing the future in full vividness as God does, making futurity's existence appear futile. Adam vocalizes that, for the rest of time, evil shall surely be present in humanity, realizing he "was far deceiv'd" in thinking "peace" is an immutable state (*PL XI*. 783-84). Revealing that

Noah's ark survives, Michael reassures him the flood does not end humanity, though it destroys Eden. Michael uses this story to teach "[Adam] that God attributes to place/No sanctity" (*PL XI*. 836-37). By demystifying paradise's "inviolability" (sanctity, n.2), asserting that any place can be destroyed by God, Michael confirms that evil is indeed everywhere on earth, but this does not mean Adam must see everything as totally evil. The archangel affirms goodness' implicit omnipresence and offers Adam hope through the symbol of a rainbow. Recognizing the rainbow's literal and figurative beauty, Adam rejoices at the sight of God's promise, shifting from an objectified perception of the world to one that recognizes metaphorical significance.

Michael also redresses Adam's lustful and unconstrained objectification of Eve, which sequesters him from wisdom. Portraying "just men" who seem like they "worship God," Michael relates how a "bevy of fair women" changes these "sons of God" (*PL XI*. 578-82, 622). The men "ey'd them, and let thir eyes/Rove without rein," eloping with the "atheists" (*PL XI*. 585-86, 625).³⁸ Focused on the joyous marriage ceremony, Adam does not see the men's lustfulness and falsely rejoices to Michael, "much better seems this vision" (*PL XI*. 599). The archangel urges him to observe beyond the surface, "judge not what is best/By pleasure;" although the men display God's "spirit," they stop receiving God's invisible "gifts" the moment they covet after the "fair" women (*PL XI*. 603-14). Still blinded by appearances, Adam mourns how "man's woe/Holds on the same, from woman began" (*PL XI*. 632-33), claiming femininity thwarts masculine holiness. Michael corrects Adam by stating that sin begins in "man's effeminate slackness," forgetting to "hold his place by wisdom" (*PL XI*. 634-36). While Michael seems to degrade women by characterizing Adam's sin as "effeminate," Gina Hausknecht demonstrates

³⁸ Milton's speaker invokes Christ's warnings against adultery, how perfidy occurs when the "eye" looks "on a woman" with "lust" (*KJV*, Mat. 5.27-29).

that while seventeenth-century writers typically understood “effeminacy” as antagonistic to masculinity, Milton likens effeminacy to boyish immaturity.³⁹ Thus, Michael undermines Adam’s observation and portrays how Adam conceives sin; his habitual trust in appearances inroads the first pair’s disobedience, abandoning God’s wisdom for objectifying sight.

Michael’s final lesson teaches Adam to see with an eternal perspective, reminding him to use his internal sight to perceive and follow God’s plan. Although futurity will be rife with evil men feigning goodness, Michael declares that Christ’s crucifixion and its promise of a second paradise adumbrate, for those who inwardly follow God’s wisdom, “ages of endless...joy and eternal bliss” (*PL XII*. 521, 549-51). Adam replies, “how soon hath thy prediction, seer blest,/Measur’d this transient world, the race of time,/Till time stand fixt” (*PL XII*. 553-55), recalling “How Soon Hath Time.” By praising Michael’s ability to reveal eternity, Adam praises Michael’s “blest” sight in its portrayal of an eternal perspective, recognizing earth’s transience and eternity’s “fixt” nature. While “no eye” besides God’s can penetrate “eternity,” Adam understands he must “walk/As in [God’s] presence” and “ever...observe his Providence” (*PL XII*. 556, 562-64), keeping past, present, and future in mind. Though singular moments are wrought with good and evil, Adam learns he has to observe them within the eternal fabric of time, connecting them instead of fixating on any one point. Gaining an eternal perspective, Adam realizes that “things deem’d weak” subvert “worldly strong,” that wisdom comes from “suffering for truth’s sake,” that death can be “the gate of life” (*PL XII*. 567-71). Adam therefore renounces his objectifying tendencies by understanding the latent presence and power of opposites within appearances. He learns that someone whose outward looks may exhibit weaker strength, like Eve, can be strong when they abide by wisdom; or that death, which seems evil,

³⁹ See Haushknecht’s “The Gender of Civic Virtue” (30).

can be the doorway to peace, embodying a knowledge of God's unseen omnipresence. In lieu of Adam's inner metamorphosis, Michael confidently sends him out of Eden with Eve, for they will "not be loath/To leave this paradise, but shalt possess/A paradise within [them], happier far" (*PL* XII. 585-87), underscoring the internal barometer, and not external existence, of paradise.

While Adam needs his inner vision redressed, *Paradise Lost* also validates Eve for listening to her intuitions and instincts, suggesting the unconscious, perhaps even more so than sight, is a venerable mode of acquiring higher intelligence. Eve needs this validation because her demonic dream earlier in Book V disrupts her psyche, effectively leading her to eat the fruit of knowledge. At the end of the poem, when Adam reunites with his wife after his time with Michael, Eve tells her husband

Whence thou return'st, and whither went'st, I know;
For God is also in sleep, and dreams advise,
Which he hath sent propitious, some great good
Presaging (*PL* XII. 610-14).

Unlike her first dream, which presages humanity's fall, Eve's second dream avouches that "by [her] the promis'd seed shall all restore" (*PL* XII. 621-23) Eve's second dream thus teaches her that her evil action has plenty of good come out of it: that by her Christ will save humanity and ring in a second paradise. As Michael implies, Eve will make humanity happier with the power of retrospection, or "meditation on the happy end" (*PL* XII. 605). In the next section, I want to suggest Milton's poem latently lauds hearing the unconscious as an alternative mode of knowledge acquisition.

Hearing as the Unsung Hero of *Paradise Lost*

To understand revelatory hearing in Milton's poem, I will first explain how Milton's speaker characterizes humanity's "tragic" fall (*PL IX. 6*), because Eve tragically eats the fruit of knowledge after listening to Satan. Milton's speaker defines tragedy akin to how Friedrich Nietzsche does. For Nietzsche, tragedy is the representation of individuals, like Eve, who expand human ability, who suffer for doing so, but who are ultimately heroic for revealing the capacity for oneness with the universe.⁴⁰ At the beginning of Book IX, Milton's speaker declares he must change his "notes to tragic" (*PL IX. 6*), foreshadowing Eve's "heroic urge" to acquire subjective knowledge (Nietzsche 781). The speaker's switch to tragic "notes" contrasts the "talk" of the first eight books, referring to the first pair's ability to "partake" in "indulgent...rural repast" directly with "God or angel" (*PL IX. 1-4*). This "talk" characterizes what Nietzsche terms the Dionysiac: when individuals experience the universe as one connected thing. Presumably, this is what Eden is like before the fall. However, Milton's speaker does not always make paradise appear harmonious, because of how Adam and Eve's relationship becomes discordant after Eve's dream, exacerbated by Raphael's visit.⁴¹ Yet, the first pair's "disobedience" further severs humanity from "heaven," whose "just rebuke" creates a "world of woe," dominated by "sin," "death," and "misery" (*PL IX. 7-12*). While the fallen world seems utterly wicked, Milton's poem implicitly suggests Eve acts heroically because she gives the first pair an awareness of the mind's imperfect faculties, similar to how Nietzsche writes that tragic heroes endow "humanity [with] the best and highest of that which it is capable," but that they must also "accept the

⁴⁰ My discussion follows Nietzsche's "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music."

⁴¹ Both Fuller and Silver suggest Raphael's visit is more burdensome than mollifying because of the angel's method of instruction, which is too transcendent for Adam and Eve.

consequences” of their actions: “namely the...tribulations which the offended heavenly powers *must* in turn visit upon the human race as it strives nobly toward higher things” (780, Nietzsche’s italics). God *must* punish Adam and Eve with suffering for eating the fruit, violating an arbitrary interdiction which protects their innocence, but God does not do so to hurt them. Rather, their pain protracts their learning capabilities, which brings more glory to God. Milton’s speaker indicates Eve’s heroism when he aligns himself with an elevated sense of hearing.

Critiquing epics of old, Milton’s speaker models his aesthetic methodology around a feminized notion of hearing, to suggest obeying higher callings exemplifies ideal subjectivity. Milton’s speaker asserts his “argument” is not “less but more heroic” than the “rage” of men in classical epics (*PL IX*. 16). He seeks to soar above their “wars,” “races,” and “gorgeous knights” (*PL IX*. 28-36). Such tales are focused on surfaces and self-aggrandizement, fetishizing fame as Achilles does in *The Iliad* (*PL IX*. 15). Instead, Milton’s speaker desires to sing of “patience and heroic martyrdom/Unsung,” claiming these invisible virtues can “raise” his song into “higher argument,” for how they can make individuals more “[self-]sufficient (*PL IX*. 31-33). Rather than painting meretricious beauty, Milton’s speaker implies his style must reveal unapparent, beneficial, and beautiful actions, asking his “celestial patroness” Urania, who visits him nightly “and dictates to [him] slumbering, or inspires/Easy [his] unpremeditated verse,” to give him “answerable style” (*PL IX*. 20-24). Whether Urania imbues prophetic words into him or endows spontaneous inspiration is inutile if the speaker cannot produce an aesthetically pleasing style. His quest to beautifully represent unseen, heroic virtues is aggravated by restrictive factors such as cold climate, old age, and blindness; yet, “much they may, if all be [his],/Not hers who brings it nightly to [his] ear” (*PL IX*. 44-48). Although external factors “may” hinder the poet’s abilities, Milton’s speaker realizes he can achieve “answerable style” by listening to his female

muse, transforming himself into a vessel. Since Urania transcends the human realm, impregnating him with the words he must write, Milton's speaker realizes all he has to do is hear and freely subject himself to Urania's inspiring dictation. Through his free subjection to Urania, Milton's speaker surpasses egoistic and classical notions of self-identity, offering a conception of the self as both an individual and dependent on universal power. The emphasis on Urania's femininity, her imaginative inspiration, and the way she speaks to the speaker in his dreams via his ear, links the speaker to Eve, who follows her own call of personal destiny, incited by Satan whispering into her ear while she sleeps.

Therefore, Eve's heroic quest commences with her dream. Although Eve's dream seems diabolical, I will justify it as part of her unconscious fulfillment of God's plan. Its musicality awakens Eve's need for self-knowledge. Comparing Milton's conception of dreams to his contemporary and classical sources, Manfred Weidhorn claims Eve's dream can be analyzed as an epic device, reminiscent of Agamemnon's in *The Iliad*. Weidhorn suggests epics use dreams to show how supernatural powers alter plots.⁴² In terms of Milton's epic, Eve's dream signals the first pair's fall. Scholars differ on the question of whether we should interpret Eve's dream as a preliminary fall or an awakening of her higher faculties and self-consciousness.⁴³ Building off the latter, I argue that Eve's dream, and later her encounter with the serpent, parallels a musical

⁴² See *Dreams in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (Weidhorn 8, 141).

⁴³ For the former opinion, see Brendan Prawdzik's "Theater of Vegetable Love: *Paradise Lost*," which argues that Satan impregnates within Eve the desire to be seen and admired, an argument echoed by Arnold Stein and E.M.W Tillyard. For the latter, Millicent Bell's "The Fallacy of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*" suggests Eve's dream helps the first pair become aware of their sinfulness.

fugue, a quintessential technique of harmony in Baroque music.⁴⁴ Starting with her dream, Eve learns to harmonize her own internal rhythms with those of the universe by listening to alterity: her dream and Satan's serpent as the paragons of difference in Eden.

Underscoring the musicality of Eve's dream, Alexander Goehr composed a piece entitled "Eve Dreams in Paradise" (1989) because he was drawn to Eve's rising and falling speech, detecting a circularity as well as an interplay between her and Satan's voices.⁴⁵ Milton's speaker invokes music at the opening of Book V, when he sings of the "sound" of "leaves and fuming rills," punctuated by the "shrill matin song" of birds (*PL V.* 5-7). The airy melody of the garden contrasts the high-pitched birds, juxtaposing consonant and dissonant noises, which mirrors the two moods and voices in Eve's dream. Eve begins relating her dream with how she hears an indistinct, "gentle" voice "close" to her "ear," asking her why she sleeps during the "silent" and "pleasant" night (*PL V.* 38-39). The initial setting of Eve's dream is therefore placid, primed for rises and falls of tension. Once Eve arises and finds not Adam but the tree of knowledge, which looks "fairer" to her under moonlight, she becomes further disoriented when she encounters one who is "shap'd" like the angels, inverting her perception of the forbidden tree and God's angelic guards (*PL V.* 48-53). Increasing Eve's "damp horror," Satan praises and eats the interdicted fruit; as her fear depresses, Satan gives some to Eve to "taste," which makes her fly, ending her dream in panic (*PL V.* 65, 86). Eve's dream thus dovetails consonance and dissonance, emphasizing musical rhythm. The interplay of voices comes from how Eve and Satan repeat certain words. Satan declares that nature is to "gaze" on Eve, while she says he "gaz'd" on the

⁴⁴ A fugue is when one voice of music follows and imitates a leading one, as Professor Craig Wright defines. James Whaler points out that the rhythm of lines 561-63 of Book XI, which sing of a "resonant fugue," correspond to a fugal effect (Milton 444).

⁴⁵ Robert Fallon interviews Goehr in "'Eve Dreams in Paradise' A Musical Setting for Milton."

fruit (*PL* V. 47, 57). Other repeated words include “seems” and “seem’d” (*PL* V. 52, 69), or “see” and “seen” (*PL* V. 56, 80). Interestingly, these doubled words center on appearances, seemingly indicating Eve’s covert narcissism; however, rather than extrapolating a psychoanalytic diagnostic from the pattern’s content, the pattern’s structure underscores how Eve notices and imitates sounds, finding and generating her voice through others.

In terms of the dream’s content, the nightingale represents Eve’s unconscious proclivity for and love of song. The nightingale’s love song, which copies celestial music, unveils Eve’s disposition to harmonize with universal polyphony. The dream’s figure declares that the night’s “silence yields/To the night-warbling bird, that now awake/Tunes...his love-labor’d song” (*PL* V. 39-41). The “night-warbling bird” is an allusion to the nightingale, more specifically to the classical figure of Philomela. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* relates how, after being raped by her sister’s husband Tereus and refusing to stay silent, Philomela’s tongue is torn out by Tereus. Philomela’s sister avenges her by having her husband unwittingly eat their son. To escape Tereus’ wrath, Philomela and her sister ask the gods to transform them into birds, the former is changed into a nightingale, recovering her voice by becoming a songbird.⁴⁶ Philomela is not the night-warbling bird’s only connection; Milton devotes a whole sonnet to the nightingale and references the bird in his second Prolusion.⁴⁷ In “O Nightingale,” the nightingale sings in the “eve, when all the woods are still,” filling the “lover’s heart” and portending “success in love” (*ON*. 2-7). In his second Prolusion, Milton portrays how the nightingale, “solitary trilling” in the night, labors to “harmonize [its] songs with that heavenly music to which [it] studiously [listens]” (603), “heavenly music” being the harmony of celestial spheres proposed by

⁴⁶ See *Metamorphoses* Book VI 440-503 for Philomela’s story.

⁴⁷ Milton’s speaker also compares himself to the nightingale (*PL* III. 38-40).

Pythagoras. Milton's nightingale thus mimics celestial music with its love songs. In hearing the figure's indistinct voice and the nightingale's love song, Eve states that she "rose as to [Adam's] call" (*PL* V. 48). Eve's action parallels the way she hears and follows the "murmuring sound/Of waters," God's voice, and Adam's amorous poetry in her first moments of consciousness (*PL* IV. 453-54), calling attention to how Eve is attuned to sound. When she obeys the "call" and eats the fruit in her dream, Eve flies and wonders at her "high exaltation" (*PL* V. 90), whose astrological importance during Milton's time signified a planet's position "in the zodiac in which it exerted its greatest influence" (exaltation, n.3). In this sense, Eve obeying the "call," resulting in her flight above the sky, represents a consonance with celestial harmony. Although Eve's dream anticipates humanity's fall, it also reveals Eve's inclination to harmonize with divine music, suggesting her consumption of the fruit progresses God's universal symphony.

Despite the way scholars tend to reprobate Eve during the temptation, I claim Eve listens to God's will, concealed within the serpent's inarticulate and articulate sound effects. When Satan first approaches Eve in the form of the serpent, he moves "on his rear" in a "circular," broadsiding fashion, the serpent's folds forming "a surging maze" (*PL* IX. 497-99). Because the serpent's body is correlated to a "maze," Milton's speaker implicitly compares the serpent's beautiful aesthetic to the spiritual complexity latent in the rupture of God's interdiction. While it is easy to define the center of Satan's mazy temptation as absolutely evil, as an attempt to ruin God and humanity, there is unseen goodness in its intricate, moving folds. When the serpent approaches her, Eve hears "the sound/Of rustling leaves, but minded not" because Eve's "duteous" nature preoccupies her with the "call" of work, not with the animals she sees daily (*PL* IX. 517-21). Eve's lack of acknowledgement emboldens Satan to stand directly before her "in gaze admiring;" the serpent then "lick'd the ground whereon she trod./His gentle dumb

expression turn'd at length/The eye of Eve to mark his play" (*PL IX*. 524-28). Brendan Prawdick highlights these lines to show how Satan plays on Eve's ostensible desire to be gazed at; Silver agrees because of the idolatrous language the speaker uses to describe the serpent's admiration. These readings emphasize sight and neglect hearing, which is more crucial here because Eve does not care for her appearance. What gains her attention is the "gentle dumb expression" the serpent makes, that is, its hissing. "Dumb" applies to "lower animals...as naturally incapable of *articulate* speech" (dumb, adj.1, my italics), such as when snakes trill their tongues. This auditory effect is what moves Eve's eye. With Eve's "attention gain'd," Satan "with serpent tongue" begins his "fraudulent temptation" (*PL IX*. 529-31). The shift from inarticulate noises to articulate words is important because it presents Eve with two sides of language, which parallels the duality of self-identity.

Integral to understanding the serpent's dual auditory effects, the way they mirror Eve's selfhood, is Julia Kristeva's "Revolution in Poetic Language." Up until her encounter with Satan, Eve is accustomed to the languages of Adam, the angels, and God, which, besides Adam's impassioned wooing in Book IV, are dogmatic, didactic, and staid. While Adam and Eve sing "unmeditated" songs to God daily (*PL V*. 149), their praise is implicitly about the great chain of being, a hierarchical linkage connecting God to humanity, situating their poetry within a rule-bound system. Eve is thus very familiar with the language's symbolic side, which Kristeva defines as language's functional capacity. However, Eve before the temptation is not familiar with language's semiotic side: a "womb" made up of inarticulate, "unfettered," and rhythmic sounds (Kristeva 93-98). According to Kristeva, selfhood is always in process and on trial, meaning subjects incur constant change and perpetual judgement, mirrored respectively by the semiotic and symbolic. Eve is aware of herself as an object of God's judgement, his good will

depending on her obedience to his interdiction. But because of the pressure exerted by God's law, along with the absence of motherly affection, Eve's self-identity lacks the knowledge of and freedom to embrace change. Eve fills her lack when she eats the fruit, gaining a complete idea of herself by changing the first pair's position in paradise, paradoxically fulfilling God's plan.

As a whole, the temptation rings like a sonorous fugue, in which Satan and Eve's voices reflect one another. By listening to each other's words, tuning their speech to each other, Eve does not eat the fruit wholly on her own volition and Satan does not absolutely coerce her into sinning. Because of the mutuality of their actions, Eve is not entirely erroneous in breaking God's command. Satan commences their musical movement with flattery, but, by negating Satan's idolizations of her appearance, Eve demonstrates structural listening, seeking out information which can fill the gap in her self-identity.⁴⁸ Though the serpent calls Eve the "fairest resemblance of [her] maker," questioning why only Adam and the animals should "gaze" upon her, to Eve what is amazing is not the serpent's blandiloquence but the serpent's "voice," which is "tun'd" like a song (*PL IX*. 538-39, 549-51). Eve exclaims,

What may this mean? Language of man pronounc't
 By tongue of brute, and human sense exprest?
 The first at least of these I thought deni'd
 To beasts, whom God on their creation-day
 Created mute to all articulate sound;
 The latter I demur, for in thir looks
 Much reason, and in thir actions oft appears (*PL IX*. 553-562).

⁴⁸ By contrast to regressive listening, Adorno defines structural listening as listening to all the individual parts of a piece of music, constructing a whole.

Surprised by the serpent's articulate "language" and expression of "human sense," Eve listens structurally, hearing all the parts of Satan's speech in hopes to discover that which will improve her self-understanding.⁴⁹ The power by which his words enter "into the heart of Eve" comes from how Satan uses "reason" (*PL IX*. 550). The serpent raises reasonable doubts over what Eve knows about her existence, questioning Adam and Eve's solitariness among all the animals. Eve suggests she had inklings of animal reasoning, based on "thir looks," but she also implies she had to repress that idea because humans are supposed to have the most reason in Eden; questioning their rational superiority would destabilize Adam and Eve's identities. Eve's encounter with the serpent, however, confirms her suspicions: that her identity contains more than just what her surface displays or what she has been told. Investigating the serpent's rational abilities, Eve latently reveals that her and Adam's reason is lacking, missing its feminine underside.

In expressing a feminized, auditory and repressed notion of conscience, which guides the human will that undergirds reason, Eve unveils that she cannot yet freely obey God. When Eve finds out that the serpent eats from the interdicted tree to gain reason, she says that God's command against the fruit is "the sole daughter of his voice; the rest, we live/Law to ourselves, our reason is our law" (*PL IX*. 652-54). William Walker explicates that Eve's "law" describes an inner reason, a freedom of the will which rationally chooses to obey God according to faith.⁵⁰ Maintaining Eve's mistake is in "not reasoning long or hard enough, and in not calling upon the collaboration of another reason" (155), Walker suggests the fruit corrupts inner reason by exposing it to "sensual appetite" (*PL IX*. 1129). While I concur with Walker's explication of

⁴⁹ Christopher D'addario argues that surprise affect was integral to the Royal Society, which suggests Eve is not so far removed from the scientific union as Picciotto asserts.

⁵⁰ See Walker's "On Reason, Faith, and Freedom in *Paradise Lost*" for more on Miltonic reason.

Miltonic liberty, I do not agree with how he characterizes Eve's action as erroneous, not seeing how Eve appends human reason. Eve's feminization of God's voice, calling it his "daughter," echoes God's proclamation that, after the fall, he will "place" within humans his "umpire conscience, whom if they will *hear*" shall "safe arrive" in his kingdom (*PL* III. 194-97, my italics). While God does not explicitly feminize conscience, Fuller argues that Milton correlates its role to that of "the moon" who "sits arbitress," (*PL* I. 784-85), implying conscience as an "umpire," or arbitrator (umpire, n.1), helps humans seek reciprocity with God's will (255). However, God says that he will give humans conscience after the fall, and yet, as Adam bemoans, God's "rigid interdiction...resounds/Yet dreadful in [his] ear" (*PL* VIII. 334-35). Thus, Adam and Eve already have a form of conscience, embodied by God's prohibition raucously ringing in their ears. The notion that the first pair has to continually hear and hearken to this "rigid interdiction," without the option of hearing and heeding to other internal voices, suppresses the notion of free will; otherwise, Adam and Eve's obedience to God is expressed in a repression, not an authentic willing, of individual desire. Seeking out reason's feminine underside through hearing, Eve supplements her and Adam's freedom by reminding them that they fear disobeying God not out of a sense of punishment, but one of love.

Before they are in front of the forbidden tree, Eve and the serpent periphrastically allude to it without explicitly naming it, as if to put the onus on the other to take the lead. Like the serpent's mazy body, Satan makes the intricate seem straight. He tells her a story about a magical tree, which other animals with "like desire...to pluck and eat" look upon but cannot reach, giving the "low" serpent a "strange alteration" in "reason" (*PL* IX. 572, 592-600). By using "pluck," Satan reverberates Eve when, earlier, she describes to Adam how her dream's figure "pluckt" and "tasted" the forbidden fruit (*PL* V. 65), reminding her of the "strange alteration" she

experiences. Beginning and ending his tale with idolizations of Eve, Satan maintains the serpent's lowly appearance, disguising the knowledge he has of her unconscious. While Eve professes holiness in her response, she implies that she knows which tree the serpent is talking about, masking her desire for an understanding of selfhood. Eve tells "the sly snake,"

.....Thy overpraising leaves in doubt
 The virtue of that fruit.....
 But say, where grows the tree, from hence how far?
 For many are the trees of God...various, yet unknown
 To us, in such abundance lies our choice,
 As leaves a greater store of fruit untoucht,
 Still hanging incorruptible (*PL IX*. 615-22).

Eve mimics Raphael's judgement of Adam when the angel critiques him for "attributing overmuch" in his wife's appearance (*PL VIII*. 625), but being human, a simulacrum of angel and God, means she does so out of inauthentic replication. Moreover, although she demonstrates concern over the fruit's goodness, Eve skews her speech toward the tree of knowledge when she states that there are many "unknown" trees in the garden, saying that she has an abundance of free "choice." Yet, in spite of the bounty of trees, there is one "untoucht, hanging incorruptible," that can corrupt Adam and Eve. John Rogers best demonstrates the significance of "untoucht." Showing how God never prohibits touching the tree, Rogers highlights how Eve sees the fruit and says "of this tree we may not taste nor touch" (*PL IX*. 651), arguing that she brings up "touch" to collapse Eden's "sufficiently unstable" government.⁵¹ His argument also supports the

⁵¹ See "Transported Touch: The Fruit of Marriage in *Paradise Lost*" (129). Rogers claims Eden is "unstable" because of the arbitrariness of both the fruit and the first pair's sexual hierarchy.

idea that Eve, in describing the amount of trees she and Adam have not touched, anticipates her encounter with the untouchable tree. While this may seem blasphemous, that Eve is ready to undermine God, her presaging comes not from a place of apostasy, but from an intuition of personal destiny, implanted by her dream. It also comes from how she sees Eden's feminine side neglected, as when she says the garden is suffering from "wanton growth." Listening to Satan feminize the forbidden fruit, Eve hears and finds a means to strengthen female subjectivity.

The serpent hints that Eve, when she eats the fruit, will gain self-knowledge by undergoing a journey through the childhood she never experienced. Satan likens the fruit's smell to "the teats/Of ewe or goat dropping with milk at ev'n,/Unsuckt of lamb or kid, that tend thir play" (*PL IX*. 581-83). Correlating the fruit's scent to nursing goats and their offspring, Satan incites Eve's curiosity in terms of subjectivity: like a youthful "kid," Eve wants to come to true self-consciousness. The serpent also suggests the fruit will at the same time help her return to infancy; Eve will be able to "play" as a child. Moreover, Satan invokes maternity, which Eve acknowledges is disregarded in the garden. She tells the serpent that "till men/Grow up to thir provison, and more hands/Help to disburden nature of her birth," a preponderance of Eden's progeny will be uncared for (*PL IX*. 622-24). In referring to Mother Nature's need for more helpers, Eve implies she understands the fruit as something which will ameliorate her and Eden's mistreatment, how both the garden and she are created for Adam, seemingly without purpose of their own.⁵² During his temptation speech, Satan feminizes the tree, the one forbidden part of Eden, as the "Mother of science" (*PL IX*. 679-80). Satan's feminization of the tree suggests

⁵² As Langford summarizes, Adam is first awoken outside of Eden and shown in a dream that paradise is made for him. Eve is created so that Adam may have a conversation partner.

Eve's quest for self-understanding, her exploration of the fruit's unseen effects, gives birth to a knowledge which combats the noxiousness of her innocence: believing she knows anything.⁵³

Adam and Eve's innocence is founded on their immunity to death, which can be brought forth only by eating the fruit of knowledge. While their inability to die seems like paradisiacal existence, as Eve tells the serpent, it actually makes life in Eden unsatisfactory, replete with ignorance and fear. Satan tunes his temptation with human feeling to assuage Eve's self-proclaimed fear of death. Eve says to the serpent "of this fair tree...God hath said, ye shall not eat/Thereof...lest ye die (*PL IX*. 661-663). Eve muddles God's command; first, God never says the tree is "fair," though in her dream it looks "fairer;" second, the way Eve couches the consequence of eating the fruit is slightly different than when God informs Adam "inevitably [he] shalt die" (*PL VIII*. 330), implying she may eat the fruit unless she fears death (lest, conj.1). Whether or not Eve actually fears death, Eve frames her statement as though she does, which is ironic since the first pair is immune to dying. By highlighting this irony, Eve makes it seem like she and Adam live under unreasonable fear. So, "with show of zeal and love/To man, and indignation at his wrong," Satan puts on a "new part...as to passion mov'd,/Fluctuates disturb'd, yet comely...standing, moving, or to highth upgrown...all impassion'd thus began" (*PL IX*. 675-679). Milton's speaker underlines Satan's theatrical nature not to undermine his speech but to buttress its credibility, underscoring an urgency to ruin Adam and Eve's ignorance. Milton's speaker states that Satan is "*all* impassioned," recalling how Milton's angels are made with "all heart" (*PL VI*. 350), which undercuts the idea that Satan's speech is only histrionic rhetoric. Rather, he feels "indignation" towards the first pair's incomplete self-knowledge. Satan's

⁵³ Silver writes that Milton portrays how "innocence without self-consciousness" makes "natural affinity for the good...become not only self-regarding but also self-deluding" (340).

passion is mirrored in the way his voice “fluctuates” and is “yet comely,” displaying human vicissitude and self-composure. As an “orator” orating on “some great cause” (*PL IX*. 670-72), the serpent moves and stands with its neck high, paralleling the modulations and self-restraint in Satan’s voice. Satan’s oration therefore mollifies Eve’s fear of death by embodying courage and bravery in the face of danger, calling her to take a leap of faith.

I am not suggesting Satan’s temptation is absolved of its idolatry, specious evidence, and prejudiced denigrations of God. The temptation is primarily demonic. However, Satan’s rationale for why a fear of death is irrational ironically justifies God’s goodness. Listening to the serpent, Eve learns about the evil of arbitrary, subjective perception. Satan warns Eve “do not believe/Those rigid threats of death,” for she “shall not die” by the fruit (*PL IX*. 684-85). Nor shall she die “by the threat’ner,” the serpent justifying his claims by saying “look on me...who...[lives]” (*PL IX*. 687-88). While the serpent’s vitality is an illusion, Satan’s point is that Eve will not die immediately after eating the fruit. Recalling the poetic speaker’s own opposition to “Neptune’s ire” at the beginning of Book IX, Satan assures Eve that God will not “incense his ire” toward her “for such a petty trespass” (*PL IX*. 27, 692-93). And he is right; when Adam and Eve break God’s command, God castigates the serpent, and by extension Satan; God is stern but loving in punishing the first pair. Most saliently, Satan subverts death’s severity and adumbrates Eve’s cognitive liberation, how the fruit leads

To happier life, knowledge of good and evil,
 Of good, how just? Of evil, if what is evil
 Be real, why not known, since easier shunn’d?
 God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;
 Not just, not God; not fear’d then, nor obey’d:

Your fear itself of death removes the fear...

...Ye shall die perhaps, by putting off

Human to put on gods, death to be wisht (*PL IX. 697-714*).

Foreshadowing Michael, Satan asseverates that Eve will have a “happier life” by eating the fruit, because she will know that God is “good” and “just” in all his ways, deserving to be “fear’d” and “obey’d” in light of him not hurting her. Eve’s demonstration will prove God is good and just because the fruit is not inherently evil. The fruit’s interdiction is just an arbitrary warning, which is why God is merciful to the first pair. What is revealed by eating the fruit is not its evilness but the arbitrariness of evil. The fruit itself does not lead to evil but the transgression of rules does. And yet, while Eve’s penalty is to bear pain during childbirth and more stringent masculine control, her punishment does not have to be felt as “evil” because, as Adam puts it, Eve’s “pains” can be “recompens’t with joy” through an eternal perspective (*PL X, 1051-52*). In a similar vein, Satan implies Eve’s “fear” is a product of her subjective perspective; by fixating on death, Eve’s mind creates fear; seeing her own fixations, she can “remove” fear by re-channeling it elsewhere. Satan thus shows Eve that she arbitrarily defines the fruit as evil, presupposing it has inherent terror or pain, without it actually being innately evil. Adam and Eve’s “eyes” opened as “gods, knowing both good and evil” (*PL IX. 706-9*), is an apt comparison because they see the truth behind God’s adjuration: a subjective or a universal point of view determines their understandings of evil. Eve “shall die,” in both a literal and figurative sense, but death is “to be wish’t” for because she will not be chained to arbitrary interpretations of death, pain, or fear. What, then, can Eve’s “knowledge” do to “hurt...[God’s] will if all be his” (*PL IX. 725-26*)? Nothing, because God’s will for the universe cannot be corrupted. In spite of evil’s now explicit presence, God’s universe will be made more fruitful by Eve’s listening action.

Before I conclude this section by explaining Eve's heroinism, I will argue that Milton's poem celebrates regressive hearing when it is linked to moments of cognitive liberation. I will also claim that Eve, in listening to her own paranoia, is reminded that alterity consummates selfhood. Finally, I will suggest *Paradise Lost* advocates for listening to others as a means to internal healing. First, rather than dismiss Eve for regressively listening to Satan, Milton's poem represents how Eve also frees her mind in listening to her instincts. Satan's words enter "into [Eve's] heart too" easily, and "in her ears the sound/Yet rung...with reason, to her seeming, and with truth" (*PL IX*. 733-38). On one hand, Eve hears only that which is pleasurable to her, not questioning the serpent's statements. On the other, Satan's words catalyze Eve's consciousness. Because Eve's ears are ringing with what she believes is reasonable and true, Milton's speaker's implies Eve physically and figuratively cannot listen to anything else, that her mind is blocked from hearing God and Adam's voices, allowing her to hear and express her own thoughts. She muses on the fruit and its consequences; in doing so, Eve finds and listens to her own voice.⁵⁴ Before her encounter with the serpent, Eve's regressive listening centers on her desire to hear Adam's voice, which is admirable. Yet, excessively desiring to hear his voice not only occludes Eve's ability to hear and voice her own, it also suppresses her sense of self. Regressively listening to the serpent's voice paradoxically frees her subjectivity.

Unearthing her subjective agency, Eve experiences cognitive liberation, which is likened to intellectual ecstasy and music. Eve's celebration of selfhood is ungodly, temporarily marring her faith, but her encounter with unbound self-knowledge also teaches her self-limitation. Eating the fruit, Eve is so "intent...on [its] taste" that "naught else" she regards (*PL IX*. 786-87). Eve's

⁵⁴ I am not claiming Eve does not have her own voice before the temptation scene. She obviously does. However, before the fruit, Adam dominates her inner thoughts, as when he reasons away the evilness of her dream, preventing Eve from expressing how she truly feels.

fixation is homologous to rapturous entrancement, instigated by how she feels grown “mature/In knowledge” (*PL IX*. 803-4). As thanks to the fruit, Eve states that she wants to sing to the tree “each morning” (*PL IX*. 800). Eve’s musical compulsion echoes Nietzsche’s ecstatic Dionysiac: or the “singing and dancing” caused by “hearing the gospel of universal harmony” (777). However, Eve is wrong for displacing her worship onto the tree, since it should be for God. The speaker even characterizes Eve with apostasy, “nor was God-head from her thought./Greedily she ingorg’d without restraint” (*PL IX*. 790-91). Yet, Eve’s noetic *jouissance*, tucked within the poem’s climax, absolves her irreligiosity because she has never experienced, as she says, that which feeds “at once both body and mind” (*PL IX*. 779). Though she contemplates “God-head,” Eve has never experienced the truth of something like a book. Milton writes in *Areopagitica* that books satisfy the mind in the same way as food to the body: “when God did enlarge the universal diet of man’s body, saving ever the rules of temperance, he then also, as before, left arbitrary the dieting and repasting of our minds” (727). Temperance is still needed for both food and knowledge, as Milton states above and Raphael tells Adam. Eve is thus erroneous for thinking about god-head in excess, but she should be forgiven as Adam when he gourmandizes Raphael’s stories. Eve’s reaction is just an ephemeral effect of mental freedom “without restraint,” of the mind “free from the body” concentrating “its powers for the unbelievable *delight* of participating in the life of the immortal gods.”⁵⁵ Despite the way Milton’s speaker seems to question the validity of her experience, “whether true/Or fancied” (*PL IX*. 788-89), her ensuing acquisition of subjective truth suggests that even delusions can contain divine revelations.

⁵⁵ This quote with my italics is from Milton’s seventh Prolusion, used in my introduction. The *Paradise Lost* speaker reverberates the collegiate Milton when he states that Eve had not felt “such *delight* till” eating the fruit (*PL IX*. 787, my italics).

After her zenith, Eve learns that the highs from cognitive liberation require lows, reflected in her paranoia. In vocalizing and listening to her own horrified thoughts, Eve practices paranoid hearing, discovering her deepest fear: becoming eternally separated from Adam.⁵⁶ When she first displays paranoia, Eve says “perhaps I am secret...other care perhaps/May have diverted...our great forbiddar, safe with all his spies,” from “continual watch” (*PL IX*. 811-15). Using the language of surveillance, Eve characterizes God as a spy and herself as a convict who has possibly escaped God’s eye. However, in repeating “perhaps,” Eve spotlights her paranoid self-doubt, which escalates when she thinks of her future,

.....what if God have seen,
 And death ensue? Then I shall be no more
 And Adam wedded to another Eve,
 Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
 A death to think. Confirm’d then I resolve,
 Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe;
 So dear I love him, that with him all deaths
 I could endure; without him live no life (*PL IX*, 826-33).

Cogitating aloud over her relationship with Adam, Eve’s fear of death solidifies. She undermines her previously erroneous characterization of God, remembering his omniscience. Further demonstrating that she is listening to herself, Eve answers her own questions on life without Adam, imagining “another Eve” who will satisfy Adam, “a death to think” for her. Eve expresses

⁵⁶ Paranoid hearing is my own coinage. I define it as listening to paranoid and uncurbed thoughts, which in themselves can produce revelatory knowledge. It is analogous to how Robert Fink describes listening to sublime and out-of-control music, evoking a fear of death and having the potential for “revelation of unspeakable content” (Dell’Antonio 6).

such melancholy over a hypothetical life without Adam that this imagination kills her sense of self. By audibly hypothesizing what may happen after her death, Eve remembers the significance of being made from Adam's rib: her life "in bliss or woe" as completely entwined with his. Choosing to die with Adam, Eve realizes how much she loves him, needing his support more than ever. While this choice appears selfish on one the one hand, on the other it parallels Eve's rebirth, her re-understanding that self-identity is built by, not opposed to, alterity.

Before he reunites with Eve, Adam in "his heart" divines "of something ill...hee the falt'ring measure felt" (*PL IX*. 845-46), intuiting Eden's new "irregular beat" (Milton 398). The fact that Milton's speaker represents Adam's divination through feeling, and not sight, underlines an empathetic realignment with his wife. Implicitly, Adam hears this novel and inaudible "beat," suggesting his ear and heart, like Eve's, are connected. Because of this connection, Milton's poem suggests hearing is linked with internal healing, meaning external voices can undo covert and noxious egoism, which Adam embodies. Although both Adam and Eve feel shame for eating the fruit, after realizing their lost innocence, Adam, "though not less than Eve abasht," first speaks, telling his wife "o Eve, in evil hour thou didst give ear" (*PL IX*. 1065-67). While Eve may be the first to eat the forbidden fruit, Adam is the first to sin by defining her listening action as "evil," when he is as much to blame. Later, he even calls his wife "a serpent," as "crooked" as his "rib" (*PL X*, 867. 884-85). Though Adam berates his wife, Eve uses a higher sense of listening to hear his pain of lost paradise, justly offering herself up as a sacrifice for causing his fall. She declares she has wronged "God and [Adam]," while her husband "against God only" (*PL X*. 931), recognizing his sacrifice for her. For his selflessness, Eve begs "heaven" to remove the "sentence" from Adam's head and put it on her own (*PL X*. 934). In seeing his wife's self-abnegation, Adam denounces his self-centrism, acknowledging his hand in Eve's fall, "to me

committed and by me expos'd" (*PL* X. 957). Thus, despite the fact that Eve's listening causes their downfall, Eve ironically reverses hearing's depravity by giving ear to Adam, healing his inner discord. Though Michael later shows Adam visions through his eyes, Eve opens Adam's ears and heart to hear Michael's wisdom, which more saliently transforms Adam's mind.

Having established hearing's healing power, I would like to return to why Eve is the heroine of *Paradise Lost*. My reasoning stems from Rogers who suggests Eve falls into a triad of Miltonic heroes. Rogers shows how the speakers of Milton's final three works use four monosyllabic words to signal heroic actions.⁵⁷ Milton's speaker in *Paradise Lost* frames Eve's action as "she pluck'd, she eat" (*PL* IX. 781). In *Paradise Regained*, after Jesus resists Satan's temptations, the speaker says "he said and stood" (*PR* IV. 561) exemplifying an action-less heroism; contrastingly, in *Samson Agonistes*, where Samson is shorn of his God-like strength, Milton's speaker characterizes the fulfillment of Samson's suicidal wishes with "he tugg'd, he shook" (*SA*. 1650), apocalyptically destroying the temple which holds him prisoner. Rogers states that Samson's heroic action reasserts Eve's heroism to Miltonic readers. Expanding upon his assertion, I argue Eve is the most consummate and balanced out of the triad. Not only is Eve the sole woman, she also liberates humanity from a fictional notion of Edenic existence by unlocking subjective time, hearing and following the call of her personal destiny.

As a middle between Jesus, the incarnation of peace replete with power, and Samson, the embodiment of chaotic annihilation, Eve unveils that death frames and makes life more meaningful. In rupturing God's warning, which God foresees and permits, Eve proves that God is a good father, who desires to teach his children that appearances are deceptive. Although the fruit is a sign of obedience, obediently submitting to God is impossible by beautiful surfaces

⁵⁷ This comes from Rogers' final lecture on Milton in his online course series (oyc.yale.edu).

alone, especially when he authorizes disenchanting aspects into the garden: the fruit, Adam and Eve's sexual hierarchy, Eve's demonic dream, talking snakes, and imperfect sensory perception. While Silver suggests such incongruities are exactly what Adam and Eve need to discover God more, she seems to think they are not supposed to search him out in the fruit. Yet, the fruit's interdiction, as well as its necessary rupture, is what makes God a just paternal figure and his spiritual ideology valid. As Slavoj Žižek summarizes Lacan, a good father is one that prohibits things from his children with the expectation that they violate his prohibitions, so that they truly learn from their mistakes.⁵⁸ Thus, God's ideology works not just in his explicit discourse but also in his implicit, sanctified violations, as when Eve intuits that "[God's] forbidding/Commends [her] more" to eat the fruit (*PL IX*. 753-54). God's words make the fruit seem inherently evil, but he sanctions enough discrepancy in Eden so that the first pair are gently nudged into snuffing out its true nature: that it is only evil from the standpoint of arbitrary, subjective perception. By eating the fruit, Adam and Eve learn that paradise is not a pretty place but an imaginative mindset, which can perceive, move with, and balance the universe's incongruous parts. Paradise as a state of mind means, however, that only by Eden's loss can they fully and freely appreciate what God has provided them; only through ecstatic self-knowledge can they regulate and control their pleasures.⁵⁹ Effectively, only by death can the first pair know life's beauty and goodness.

Therefore, in listening to the serpent's temptation, Eve unlocks retrospection: the power to look back on irenic times during chaotic moments, or vice-versa, in order to have faith and

⁵⁸ Taken from Žižek's Youtube lecture on Lacan's four discourses.

⁵⁹ As Blake writes, "you never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough" (*MHH*. Plate 9).

hope in the unseen future.⁶⁰ By listening to her personal destiny, she unites the solidity of eternity with the infinite fluidity of personal time. As the speaker states, Eve plucks the fruit of knowledge in an “evil hour” (*PL IX*. 780). Albert Cirillo claims this description connects Eve in time with Satan’s fall, arguing that all the events in Milton’s universe occur in one colossal, cyclical moment.⁶¹ Edenic time, in which first pair do the same work daily, is also cyclical. Before Eve eats the fruit, Eve’s ears ring with Satan’s words, which allows her to hear and voice her thoughts. As her ears ring, “the hour of noon” increases “the smell/So savory of that fruit” (*PL IX*. 739-41). Eve’s increasing appetite is thus connected to hearing her own voice, lifting her out of Eden’s cyclicity into her own personal epiphany. During her awakening of subjective time, echoing her dream’s figure, Eve asserts that this “fruit divine” is the “cure of all,” transforming the “good unknown” of Eden into known good (*PL IX*. 756, 776). Eve discovers that for paradise to be good, she must be able to retrospectively look back on it and define it so; otherwise, “good” is “not had at all” (*PL IX*. 757). Only by losing paradise will Eve know for certain that Eden is good, because whatever comes her way in the future, good or bad, will also just be temporary. Although the speaker states that “all was lost,” (*PL IX*. 784), in the words of Milton’s 23-year-old self, “all is...as ever in [God’s] eye.” Ultimately, paradise’s loss is incommensurably small to eternity. Moreover, by listening to the divine ringing in her ears and herself, Eve discovers individual meaning within the universe’s apparent meaninglessness, while also later understanding that this meaning is not the most important thing ever to exist.⁶²

⁶⁰ The idea and significance of retrospection is taken from Lukács’ *Theory of the Novel*.

⁶¹ See Cirillo’s “Noon-Midnight and the Temporal Structure of *Paradise Lost*” for more on Miltonic time.

⁶² As Eve asks Adam about the meaning of the stars, “but wherefore all night long shine these, for whom?” (*PL IV*. 657).

Conclusion

It seems that, in attempting to justify the unconscious and hearing as a means of acquiring higher intelligence, I suggest Milton takes Satan's side in the fall. Unapologetically, I do believe this is the case. Blake once wrote that Milton "was a true poet and of the Devils party without knowing it" (*MHH*. Plate 6). I argue that Milton was not only a "true poet," but he was also of the "Devils party" and he *knew* it. My evidence lies in his earlier sonnets "How Soon Hath Time" and "O Nightingale." In the former, Milton's speaker states that his unknowable destiny is in the hands of "time" and "the will of heaven" (*HSHT*. 12). At the beginning of the sonnet, Milton's speaker claims "time" is "the subtle thief of youth," who has "stol'n on his wing [the speaker's] three and twentieth year" (*HSHT*. 1-2). By comparing time to a winged "thief," Milton's speaker alludes to Satan, a fallen angel who is like a "thief" that comes to "steal" (*KJV*, John. 10.10). What is more, the fact that this "thief is "subtle" recalls how Satan's serpent is characterized with "subtle wiles" (*PL IX*. 184), or how the biblical snake is "more subtil than any beast of the field" (*KJV*, Gen. 3.1), suggesting "time" is heaven's evil counterpart. In "O Nightingale," Milton's speaker writes that he "serve[s]" the "muse" and "love" (*ON*. 13-14). "Muse" refers to secular, Classical mythology, and "love" pertains to the speaker's Christian faith, implying he follows both evil and good in his quest to become a poet. Thus, in both these sonnets, Milton demonstrates his indebtedness to good and evil forces. I am not trying to claim that Milton was a covert Satanist; rather, I think Milton was acutely aware that good needs evil in order to be substantiated, that light needs darkness to be beautiful; naked illumination is just blinding. Milton's speaker in *Paradise Lost* asserts that "there is a cave within the mount of God...where light and darkness" circle "in perpetual round," allegorizing how good and evil necessitate each other's existence in an everlasting "twilight" (*PL VI*. 4-6, 12). Put differently,

God himself knows that he needs Satan for his goodness to be actualized.⁶³ What I think Milton believes is that our universe, whether we like it or not, contains both good and evil, residing everywhere and in everyone's souls. Ultimately, good or evil is a choice: in actions, in knowledge, and in interpretation. Luckily, *Paradise Lost* offers a way to surpass both good and evil through a wandering imagination, using both seeing and hearing, knowledge and understanding, to envision ourselves as parts of a universal whole.

Analyzing the poem's ending and beginning, I will conclude by suggesting that Milton's poem unveils how individuals can use seeing and hearing, married through the imagination, to make their lives more poetical, richer with revelation. As Adam and Eve go east of Eden, Milton's speaker characterizes earth's environment in the same way he describes hell's landscape in Book I. As scholars have noted, this signifies that the fallen world is one in which good and evil are now inextricably mixed. Instead of taking a pessimistic view toward this fact, Fuller avers that while Adam and Eve's banishment sentences them to a painful reality, "it simultaneously introduces them to the world of a new art" (225). This "new art," I claim, is poetry, which requires using sight and sound in imaginative ways. In the final four lines, Milton's speaker paints how for Adam and Eve

The world was all before them, where to choose
 Their place of rest, and Providence their guide;
 They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
 Through Eden took their solitary way (*PL XII*. 646-49).

⁶³ Marshall Grossman suggests Milton's God creates the universe, an incarnation of God's body and femininity, so that he can understand himself more. Grossman justifies the fall as a parallel for humans who discover the fallibility of the flesh.

“Hand in hand” alludes to Philip Sydney’s “The Defense of Poesy,” who asserts that the poet “goeth hand in hand with nature” (257). By alluding to Sidney’s justification of poetry, Milton’s speaker implies that Adam and Eve can live a poetic life amidst their fallen world, transforming their “brazen” qualities into “golden” ones (Sidney 257). On a surface level, “hand in hand” also emphasizes their union. With my reading of the poem, this union allegorizes the conjoining of higher seeing and hearing. Departing from Eden, Adam and Eve are now able to have a mutual faith in the unseen and inaudible. They are able to leave confidently because wherever they “choose” to go on their “wandering” and “solitary way,” they can know that their choice will be guided by God’s “Providence,” underlining the wedding between free will and God’s will. Thus, “hand in hand” functions on multiple levels. It not only assures the reader that Adam and Eve will be taken care of wherever they end up, that the universe is as it should be, but it also reveals that their life together will be more fruitful and poetic than when they are first plunged into the garden, on account of their elevated faith and sensory perception.

At the beginning of the poem, Milton’s speaker declares that he wants his “advent’rous song” to be that which is “unattempted yet in prose or rhyme” (*PL* I, 13-16), asking Urania for her help. While “things unattempted in prose or rhyme” can mean many things, I claim it refers to a unique quest: to portray how seeing and hearing, acquiring knowledge and understanding of the universe, can help individuals experience divine revelation. Using himself as an example in the invocations of Book III and IX, Milton’s speaker exemplifies how the senses, in conjunction with a faith in higher powers, can empower individuals to perceive and attune themselves to the universal symphony. Despite his blindness, Milton’s speaker understands that he can create “light” through his poem when he listens to Urania, or that which is his unconscious: writing down what comes to him. In an anonymous biography of Milton, the writer states that secretaries

came to Milton's house each morning to write down the verses he had dreamt of the night before, since Milton was blind and could not record his final three works on his own. When they were late, Milton complained by saying he "wanted to be milked" (1044). Whether or not this account is true matters less than what it unveils. In likening himself to a cow, implying his verses are akin to "sincere milk" (*KJV*, 1 Pet. 2.2), Milton describes the nature of revelation. Like cows, who do not wittingly produce their milk, Milton reveals that his poetic revelations are not consciously constructed; they come to him. Does this mean that only some, like the blind bards of old, are chosen to experience revelation? I think Milton would say no. Rather, in-line with Milton's monism, revelations come to each and every one of us, from all directions, voices, and times. It is up to us to choose to have our eyes, ears, minds and hearts open to anything that may come our way, because each image, each sound, and each thought has the potential for radically transforming our lives. More so than any text of his past, and in my opinion more so than in any work after Milton, *Paradise Lost* teaches individuals to see, hear, and experience all that comes to their senses.⁶⁴ By perceiving and experiencing as much of the universe as one possibly can, knowing it from the outside and feeling it on the inside, an individual can freely choose the note he or she must pluck in-tune with the universal symphony, moving within and yet beyond arbitrary notions of good and evil.

⁶⁴ Some texts I have noted through my college career that gender seeing and hearing, as well as deconstruct that binary through the imagination, are *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Things Fall Apart*, and the frame story of *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*.

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