

Construction and Rhetoric: A Study of Satan in *Paradise Lost*

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In the history of critical discussion regarding Milton's Satan, some critics argue for Satan's heroism, some adamantly oppose it, and still others see it as a distinct technique of Milton's. In any case, it is clear that the poem's construction of Satan carries intricate moral implications—and the ambiguity of his heroism thus has been a topic of discussion for some time. The critical discussion does agree, at least, that Satan is portrayed in a heroic manner. Milton's imitative epic form, his direct allusions, and the overall tone in the scenes involving Satan place the Arch Angel in a heroic position. As critics have noticed and discussed, this serves to elevate Satan's immorality; his defiance of God becomes a political battle against a tyrant; his hatred an Achillean response to injured merit; and his attempts to reclaim Heaven an epic quest. There is also little debate that Satan is, ultimately, morally perverse; the interest arises from the implications of the disparity between his morality and his literary heroism.

Of course, despite the poem's heroic portrayal of Satan, his deeds and motivations are still morally bad. In the context of the plot, which encompasses human history, Satan introduces Sin and Death to the world, he causes the fall of man, and he wages eternal war with God. The simple conclusion we draw from this disparity is that *Paradise Lost* gives heroic depictions of an evil character. Whether Milton's intention or not—and most critics accept it is—Satan's evil is juxtaposed upon his heroic descriptions. From this, critics have taken several routes of discussion. Some critics, like C.S. Lewis, argue that Satan's actions (in a very broad sense) demonstrate an incompetence that contradicts his heroism. Some, most notably Stanley Fish, argue that Satan's heroism and his evil work in competition with one another—Fish famously argues that with the gradual decline of Satan's heroism, we, as readers, lose our initial attraction for him in a way that reflects the fall of Adam and Eve and realizes our own fallenness. Others still pay particular attention to how Milton constructs Satan as a hero and conclude that he is no hero at all, but rather a perversion of the classical hero. In every response, however, the constant assumption is that Satan's character is somehow separate/removed from the poem's construction of him.

This paper will respond directly to that assumption and analyze Satan's character through multiple constructions: the explicit narrative on one hand and the more subtle, though quite evident, literary context on the other. This concept borrows from Barbara Lewalski's critical text, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms*, and her discussion of the textual construction of a distinct Satanic heroic mode. In doing so, we will see the ambiguity of Satan's character transcend a dissonance between what the poem expresses and how this is expressed, which I believe oversimplifies Milton's creativity; and Satan instead becomes a continuum of incongruities. Thus the poem creates Satan, through these two dissonant constructions, as an ongoing topic of investigation for the reader. It is not so much Milton rhetorically informing the reader, as Lewalski suggests, so much as it is a series of conflicting constructions of Satan through which the reader must navigate to "learn" the poem's stance on morality.

Lewalski and the Encyclopedic Epic: In her critical text, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms*, Barbara Lewalski studies Milton's use of literary forms to reinvent the classic epic genre into his own English Christian Epic. She demonstrates how Milton calls upon a wealth of literary forms and genres, per traditional and contemporary concepts of the epic, and his conscious manipulation of these forms provides a language through which he informs his reader. Because each of these forms "provide[s] a range of culturally defined perspectives," Milton's "imitative and allusive strategies are essentially heuristic, and that the conventions of literary genre and mode constitute a primary element of his poem's '*mundus significans*'—the rhetorical

and symbolic vocabulary shared by poet and reader” (7). In the context of her larger argument, Lewalski suggests that this dialogue between Milton and his reader involves the creation of Milton’s epic form, and the means of creation carries with it an accumulation of cultural meaning. Her final argument concerns the implication of the various literary forms. Lewalski argues they are entirely deliberative and intentional, given Milton’s advocacy of human choice (in this text as well as many of his previous works), and the rest of her book provides an analysis of, and argument for, each literary mode and its purpose/role in Milton’s rhetorical dialogue with his reader.

The method Lewalski employs to study Milton’s use of literary forms follows a simple structure. She demonstrates that Milton, through the creative imitation of classical literary forms and structures, produces various literary genres throughout the poem; these genres prefigure various literary modes (such as heroic, pastoral, hymnal, etc.); and finally, the genre and mode of a given scene work together to inform various characters’ orders of being. In this light, by these literary constructions of different characters, the text involves the reader in an intricate system of implied values and cultural significance. The literary mode of expression, be it pastoral to describe Eden or heroic to describe Satan, informs those aspects of the poem as much as the literal description given. That is to say, in the case of Eden, the use of the pastoral mode informs the setting with the carefree and innocence associated with pastoral poetry. This relationship between literary form and character construction varies, however. In the constructions of some characters, the effect is immediate. With Milton’s literary construction of God, for instance, literary “paradigms do not carry through the poem... but are provided as interpretive frames for particular scenes and episodes” (111). In the case of Satan, however, these literary forms do progress through the poem “resolv[ing] in a scene of closure” (111). As we will discuss later, the difference here (between temporality and continuous progression) indicates that the poem’s overall narrative and plot development contribute to character construction. For the purpose of explicating Lewalski’s analysis of Satan, however, it suffices to say that she follows the continual progression of literary forms relating to Satan in order to fully understand his character. Furthermore, this progression of genre and literary mode follows a gradual decline in merit, which Lewalski argues emphasizes a similar decline in Satan’s moral character.

The first of these literary forms, and the most prevalent to critical discussion, is Milton’s creation of the epic genre. As Lewalski writes,

By the formal epic question... and the answer relating it to Satan’s guilt, envy... and the “Battle proud” he raised in heaven, Milton initiates the first generic paradigm, the epic of wrath and strife. In the opening scenes in hell he employs the distinctive topoi and conventions of that kind—Homeric catalogues, epic games, a council of war, exhortations to armies—with specific reference to the two major epics... the Iliad and the Aeneid. These references involve us immediately in a process of discrimination regarding Satan’s heroic virtues. (56)

These formal aspects each inform Satan’s character in a specific way. The epic invocation and question evoke the poem’s epic genre and Satan’s foremost position within it. That is to say these conventions position Satan as a predominate figure in the poem, and given the epic genre, his role becomes a heroic one. The parallel between Achilles’ and Satan’s motivations portrays Satan as “a warrior indomitable in the face of defeat... manifesting the fortitude, determination, endurance, and leadership of the greatest epic heroes” (57). The imitative techniques that make such a comparison between the two characters inform Satan with the associated heroic virtues. Finally, the epic catalogic comparison of Satan’s physical grandeur to surpassing Odyssean warships positions Satan well beyond the strength and stature of classic epic heroes.

Despite these “deliberate parallels” equating Satan with epic heroes, Lewalski asserts that “they underscore differences... [as] we soon see that Satan does not have genuine wrongs, as they [referring to such epic heroes as Achilles, Agamemnon, etc.] did” (57). Thus as the plot progresses, Lewalski claims, Satan perverts or causes the reader to recognize his perversion of the heroic values asserted by the literary forms. Later, I will discuss this plot progression as an alternate construction of Satan, but Lewalski describes this process of heroic construction and Satanic perversion as a singular construction persisting through the poem. Thus Satan’s actions continue to undermine his heroic constructions as they arise. For instance, the heroic leadership we see from his speeches—structurally imitative of Iliadic discussions of war, in the case of the council in Hell, or of Aeneas, in the case of his lament to Beelzebub—fails when Satan perverts these classic epic models. His rhetorical manipulation of the debate in Hell perverts the Iliadic speeches encouraging one’s comrades to share glory; and the declaration of his solitary quest to ruin Paradise realizes his perversion of Aeneas’ model quest to construct a kingdom (Lewalski 58). As a heroic warrior, the parallels between Satan and the Homeric heroes are blatant. Physically, Satan is described through Odyssean grandeur, and he emotionally parallels such heroes as Achilles, Hector and others. When Satan actually battles, however, he fails to meet these models of heroism. When squaring off with Death, the poem employs “a grotesquely comic reprise of those tender and pathetic scenes of familial love in the *Iliad* in which Andromache, Thetis, and Hecuba plead with their warrior husbands and sons to avoid battle” (Lewalski 60). In spite of this direct parallel to heroic warriors like Hector and Achilles, Satan fails to meet the heroic standard of fighting for duty and honor, and he instead chooses cowardly self-preservation instead. Similarly, in the battle scene in Heaven, Satan fails to physically match the classic heroes when he falls to both Abdiel and Michael.

The conclusion to Satan’s epic of wrath and strife, as Lewalski writes, comes in the generic scene of triumph.

Both these triumphs show the victors at their moral nadirs. Yet Achilles’ actions are those of a man driven by grief and rage into desperate, aberrant behavior, whereas Satan reaches the logical end-point of his debased heroic course in this display of exultant self-congratulation... Achilles’ triumph inspires tragic terror. Satan’s inspires reprehension. (62)

In this conclusive statement, Lewalski provides the template for the rest of the poem’s construction of Satan. The literary forms provide Satan’s heroism with classical equivalents and models, be they through generic structure or theme, and Satan consistently fails to meet these standards. These heroic models certainly serve to elevate Satan’s character, by the comparison made and the apparent translation of values; but as Satan’s actions perpetually demonstrate, the allusions to Achilles or other heroes serve as a standard with which the reader can measure Satan’s anti-heroic qualities.

In addition to Satan’s perversion of his literary construction, Lewalski argues that the poem further reduces Satan’s heroism by the gradual declination of the Satanic literary forms themselves. That is to say, not only does Satan progressively pervert his heroic construction, but the Satanic heroic mode marks a steady declination in literary genres as well. Lewalski describes the “Satanic version of heroic tragedy. For this generic paradigm we are directed first to Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* and then to a succession of less noble models, reflecting the course of Satan’s decline” (62). In this literary construction, Satan evokes the Promethean sympathies in suffering and enduring tyranny; however, he grossly perverts this by the acknowledgment that, unlike Prometheus, Satan has not been wronged by God, and his course of actions will harm rather than help mankind. In this, Satan provides a direct inversion of the

Promethean model. As the poem progresses, Satan's use of the tragic convention of the soliloquy equate him with Elizabethan tragic heroes, most notably Doctor Faustus. His expression of self-doubt and agony, while certainly evoking the sympathy of the reader, marks a clear decline from the noble Promethean model to a "damned soul" (63). This decline continues when Satan expresses his motivation; the famous line, "Evil be thou my Good," places Satan amongst the villain heroes of the Elizabethan stage such as Macbeth or Richard III (PL 4.110). When Satan ponders his plan to ruin Adam and Eve, he descends even further, falling completely out of the realm of hero and becoming "the devious, ignoble antagonist of Adam and Eve... display[ing] the sheer malignity of an Iago" (Lewalski 64). Lewalski discusses the conclusion of the tragic heroic mode in Book Ten, "when God punishes Satan and the fallen angels by turning them into serpents, this last 'fall' is entirely outside the domain of tragedy. It pertains, rather, to the realm of Dante's *Commedia*... Satan becomes at last the butt of scorn and derision in this grotesque black comedy" (65). In this construction, unlike the construction of the epic hero, it is the Satanic literary mode that marks his decline. In either case, Lewalski makes clear the influence Milton's use of literary forms holds on the construction of Satan. She argues that his deliberate manipulation of genre and mode provide an heroic standard to which Satan continually fails to ascend, and at the same time, marks his steady decline in honor.

The strength of Lewalski's argument lies in her extensive analysis of Milton's comprehensive use of literary forms throughout the text. Her identification and discussion of these forms indeed indicate a "rhetorical and symbolic language shared by poet and reader," and their intricate use "involve[s] us immediately in a process of discrimination regarding Satan's heroic virtues" (7, 57). That is to say, analyzing the literary construction of Satan provides a framework of values informing our perception of his actions. The literary construction does not, however, inform Satan with these values. To illustrate this point, let us look at the battle between Satan and Michael.

In this scene, the text employs several epic conventions to construct the battle as well as the warriors involved. The narration uses Homeric catalogues and descriptions of armies, Satan and Michael are described through epic hyperbole and direct analogies to classic texts, and even the structured standoff and verbal challenges between two heroic warriors prior to dueling holds literary precedent (*PL* 6. 246-334). These literary techniques fall into the epic genre and heroic mode; and accordingly these conventions elevate the contest between Satan and Michael as an epic battle scene, and they also elevate the two angels, as warriors, to an heroic standard of military prowess and dignity.

They ended parle, and both addrest for fight
 Unspeakable; for who, though with the tongue
 Of Angels, can relate, or to what things
 Liken on Earth conspicuous, that may lift
 Human imagination to such highth
 Of Godlike Power: for likest Gods they seemd,
 Stood they or mov'd, in stature, motion arms
 Fit to decide the Empire of great Heav'n.
 Now wav'd thir fierie Swords, and in the Aire
 Made horrid Circles; two broad Suns thir Shields
 Blaz'd opposite, while expectation stood
 In horror; from each hand with speed retir'd
 Where erst was thickest fight, th' Angelic throng,
 And left large field, unsafe within the wind
 Of such commotion...

Together both with next to Almighty Arme,
Uplifted imminent one stroke they aim'd
That might determine, and not need repeate (VI.296-320)

In this moment of construction, however, neither Satan nor Michael conveys a sense of morality. The text constructs both as Godlike in strength through hyperbole and analogy; just as both are courageous and militarily superior to a heroic degree. They are equal in this sense; neither is subordinate to the other in terms of their constructed heroic values of strength or courage. The textual heroism, then, is simply a means of construction; it is a particular mode of character description that results from specific generic conventions and literary modes.

Thus, it is questionable that Satan's literary construction informs his character. At most, we can see the various heroic modes constructing a heroic template—the values and standard Lewalski describes—to which the reader may compare Satan. This returns us to Lewalski's earlier statement that it is “commonplace of criticism... that the Satanic heroic is a debased version of the classical heroic ethos” (55). It is important to note, the Satanic heroic ethos is neither the Satanic heroic mode nor the construction of Satan, but rather the byproduct of Satan's inconsistency with his construction. That is to say, the narrative construction (in terms of plot, content, etc.) of Satan's character is different than his construction through the heroic mode. The dissonance between the narrative and literary constructions, particularly in the case of Satan, results in the moral construction of the character. Those scenes when Satan's actions pervert or fail to meet the constructed literary heroic standard, then, produce the Satanic ethos. Thus, we may conclude that the Satanic ethos—what we may consider to be his ethical and moral argument within the poem's rhetorical message to the reader—is a product of the dissonance between the narrative and textual constructions.

In the following sections, I will reform Lewalski's argument into a single mode of construction, the textual, and I will discuss its dissonance from the poem's narrative construction of Satan; I will then address this dissonance as it pertains to Satan's role in Milton's rhetorical dialogue with his reader; and finally I will discuss the moral implications of Satan's rhetorical abilities in the larger scheme of Milton's work.

Exploring the Dissonance: While Lewalski's analysis of the Satanic heroic mode illustrates Milton's rhetorical progression of classical heroism to Satanic perversion, the sequential nature she prescribes to this mode seems to negate the initial interest in Satan's character. On the one hand, the conclusiveness with which Satan perverts the heroic standards (and thus falsifies his heroism) would seem to destroy the grandeur that accompanies his textual construction merely on principle of his definite failure: his heroism simply gives way to his evil. On the other hand, the sequential nature of Satan's literary construction implies that the poem's plot plays a significant role in the overall construction of Satan. More importantly, given this progression and the general trend of critical discussion, the progression of Satan's actions remains separate from the Satanic heroic mode. That is to say, the poem constructs Satan through literary means and through narrative means. The dissonance between these two constructions characterizes what Lewalski calls her concept of the Satanic Heroic Ethos. I will expand this idea to the Satanic rhetoric, as the poem's larger rhetorical context constructs Satan according to the three rhetorical concepts of ethos, pathos and logos. In this section, then, I will reapply Lewalski's method of analysis to Satan's character, and I will subtly but fundamentally alter the premises of her argument.

First, I separate the construction of Satan into two distinct processes, the literary construction and the narrative construction. The literary construction equates to Lewalski's notion of the Satanic heroic mode, and it contains the use of literary forms to inform Satan with cultural

meaning and significance. The narrative construction consists mostly of the poem's plot, the narrative sequence and Satan's words and actions. Ultimately, the exploration of these two constructions will lead to a study of what Lewalski calls the satanic heroic ethos. This concept is distinct from the satanic heroic mode, which constructs Satan through heroic literary forms. Lewalski defines the satanic heroic ethos as "a debased version of the classical heroic ethos," and as we see Satan's separate constructions reveal his perversion of heroic values, we can understand the satanic heroic ethos to signify Satan's narrative dissonance with his literary heroism.

The second premise I will change is Lewalski's notion of the literary mode of construction. She writes that Satan's literary construction "carr[ies] through the poem to be resolved in a scene of closure," and is not "provided as interpretative frames for particular scenes," like the literary construction of God (111). In the following sections, however, I will treat the Satanic literary forms both as sequential and as immediate frames of interpretation. They may be significant in their narrative sequence, but they also inherently shape our perception of the precise scene in which they appear. I acknowledge the progression of the generic modes describing Satan (for instance the declining tragic modes), but I also understand each mode to be a distinct moment of literary construction.

The final premise I will alter is Lewalski's critical focus. Rather than studying the Satanic heroic mode to understand Milton's dialogue with his reader, I will explore the Satanic heroic ethos to understand Satan's role in the text and how this influences Milton's rhetorical dialogue with his reader. The main difference here is the role of the literary construction. For Lewalski, the literary forms constructing Satan provide a vocabulary for Milton. In my argument, the two constructions of Satan will provide a distinct Satanic dissonance, and this will inform his role within Milton's larger moral dialogue.

To give these new premises contextual grounding in Lewalski's work as well as *Paradise Lost*, I will first apply each to the Battle in Heaven—a scene that displays the two separate constructions of Satan and their dissonance, the temporality of this dissonance, and Milton's larger rhetorical dialogue. In doing so, I will establish the framework for my analysis of Satan's character and of the rest of the poem.

To illustrate the premise of separating the constructions of Satan, we will look once again to the battle between Satan and Michael. As discussed, Satan and Michael are both portrayed through heroic conventions. The Homeric catalogues, the epic analogies and hyperboles all serve to elevate both the warriors as well as their mutual conflict/contest. The construction here does not prescribe heroic morality or value to the two angels so much as it does physical might and grandeur (which may be argued to be heroic qualities). More importantly, the textual construction, through epic analogies, equates Michael and Satan "together both," and does not place one physically before the other (PL 6.316). In an explicitly hyperbolic metaphor, Satan and Michael are "two broad Suns... two planets rushing," which places either among the grandest warriors of epic heroes (6.305-313). However this equality, as well as the heroism, does not last. The narrative depictions of the scene, that is the descriptions of Satan and Michael that do not employ classic convention, make this explicit. Michael is described as the "Prince of Angels" fighting against Satan, the "Adversarie," clearly introducing a hierarchy of value between the two characters (6.281-2). Additionally, in terms of plot, Satan loses the exchange to Michael, and this failure reveals further distinction along a hierarchy of heroic power. This in turn marks a dissonance between the literary and narrative constructions—the former elevating Satan to an heroic warrior, the latter portraying Satan as both corrupt and incapable. The other military failures, notably Abdiel's physical triumph over Satan and the ultimate expulsion of the rebel angels from Heaven, reiterate the dissonance between Satan's (and his followers') literary and

narrative constructions. The Satanic heroic ethos embodies itself in his inability to reach heroism, which as we have seen, is the product of constructive dissonance. In this light, Satan's failed heroism is not a part of the Satanic heroic mode, but a result of the overall narrative construction of heroism, for which the Son of God provides the ideal model.

The dissonance between literary and narrative constructions emphasizes Satan's inability and his inferiority to divinity. In a later scene from the *Battle in Heaven*, Satan and his army attack God's angels with cannons and gunpowder. Prior to the attack, the poem employs the epic convention of a war taunt. As Lewalski states, this is "traditionally a ritual public contest of words preceding the contest of arms," a convention that places the taunts of Belial and Satan within a heroic sense of military etiquette (Lewalski 83). The literary construction here continues the conventional depiction of Satan as an epic warrior, and the structure of these particular speeches informs his character as a military leader. Of course, the content of these taunts, "the scoffing, punning dialogue... is a deeper degradation of epic speech... [as] epic taunts become petty and malicious in-jokes at the enemies' expense" (83). Here, Satan's words and actions reflect the narrative construction of his character. This particular dialogue juxtaposes Satan's sarcastic and euphemistic offers of peace with the utter violence and confusion of his attack to evoke a strong moral response from the reader. The narrative construction of deceit and cruelty pervert quite clearly the honor and military etiquette evoked by the literary construction of the conventional speech. The dissonance between these two constructions, literary honor on the one hand and narrative deception on the other, provide the Satanic heroic ethos in this battle. This ethos is a clear perversion of morality, whether through physical inability or unsympathetic cruelty, that marks Satan's heroic failure due to ethical incompetence.

Of course, the *Battle in Heaven* and the accompanying dissonant constructions of Satan define the satanic heroic ethos within only this scene. Certainly, as mentioned earlier, the literary construction of Satan progresses through the poem, but various constructions are temporarily specific to their place in the poem; and it is quite obvious that the narrative content shares a similar relationship to the poem, both specific and sequential. Hence, these moments of Satanic construction provide a particular frame of interpretation for the battle scene. It follows, then, that the dissonance between the two constructions is specific to this scene. That is to say, in the *Battle in Heaven* the Satanic heroic ethos is defined by inadequacy, as seen in the disparity between Satan's literary heroism and his narrative ability; and by degradation, as seen in the dissonance between the literary invocation of military ethics and Satan's display of cruel deception. As we will see, the Satanic rhetoric is not consistently defined by these exact concepts; and the dissonance between satanic constructions, although persistent throughout the poem, affords some variation based on the context of the two constructions. Nevertheless, this process of constructive dissonance characterizes the satanic ethos; the text informs Satan's positional heroism through the satanic heroic mode, the narrative content of the poem constructs Satan in direct contrast to this heroic standard, and the resulting dissonance informs Satan's character with a moral standpoint toward heroic values and ethics.

By changing these premises, we fundamentally shift the analysis of Satan's character. The distinction between the textual and narrative constructions allows the critical focus to expand beyond the constructive technique (i.e. literary genre and mode) and explore the constructive effects. The most relevant of these effects is the persistent dissonance of Satan's character, which in turn informs the satanic ethos. As the constructions of Satan are temporal frames of interpreting his character, we can understand the satanic ethos to also continually shift according to its immediate literary and narrative contexts. Ultimately, this focus on the nature of Satanic dissonance will reveal various modes of the satanic ethos, pathos and logos; and this will allow us to explore Satan's role within the text as a rhetorical tool.

Heroic Ethos: The most prevalent mode of satanic rhetoric corresponds to Lewalski's concept of the Satanic heroic ethos. Much of the critical inquiry to Satan's character pertains to the dissonance between Satan's evil and his heroism. Barbara Lewalski's work explores this dissonance in terms of Satan's perversion of his heroic literary construction. In the preceding section, I introduced a new framework that equated the Satanic heroic ethos to the dissonance between the literary and narrative constructions of Satan. I now purport to analyze the Satanic rhetoric through this framework, paying particular attention to the construction of Satan as the poem's hero, as a heroic warrior and as a heroic leader.

The invocation to the Muse and the epic question/answer, as already discussed, positions Satan as a protagonist within the literary epic of wrath and strife they construct. These conventions serve to introduce, in addition to calling the Muse, the epic subject and argument; so by relating Satan directly to his invocation to "assert Eternal Providence, And justifie the wayes of God to men," Milton places him as the first, if not the most significant, character within the epic (*PL* 1.25-26). He is, as many critics have noted and my previous analysis has reiterated, equated with heroic standards and precedents in a way that places him at the very least, as a major protagonist of the poem. The narration, on the other hand, quite explicitly contests Satan's literary position in the poem. The narrative voice answers the epic question about the fall of man, "Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride Had cast him out of Heav'n... and with ambitious aim Against the Throne and Monarchy of God Rais'd impious War in Heav'n" (1.34-43). Such descriptions express quite clearly Satan's role both as the antagonist to mankind, in terms of the poem's impending plot, and as the "Arch-Enemy" of God, in terms of the poem's overall moral hierarchy. The dissonance between these two constructions is obvious; the narrative construction blatantly rejects the literary construction. Thus, the poem immediately creates a dissonance that aggressively questions the ethical position of Satan. In addition to establishing the importance and relevance of determining Satan's morality, this dissonance introduces the two competing constructive modes in what is their inherent separation. Due to this separation and the inflexibility, this moment of Satanic construction opens the poem with a divided Satanic ethos. In terms of how this relates to Satan, however, the strong dissonance between his two constructions reveals his rhetorical inability to attain ethos. Because of this scene's location in the poem and the vast dissonance between the two construction, very little is said pertaining to the Satanic Heroic Ethos beyond its instability. As the poem continues its construction of Satan as a hero, however, it begins to inform value into his character.

As one aspect of Satan's heroism, the poem constructs his leadership with the precedent of such heroes as Aeneas, Agamemnon and Odysseus. In the opening scenes in Hell, the fallen angels' time in Hell echoes the Trojan's time in Carthage, from the initial escape bringing them to shore, to the time spent enjoying the physical offerings of their new location; and the literary structure of Satan's speeches poignantly reflects the speeches and leadership of Virgil's Aeneas. Both of these allusive constructions inform Satan's heroic leadership with value; the images of his followers recall the fearful flight from Troy to seek their kingdom divined by the fates, and the laments to Beelzebub and speeches to the fallen angels echo the strength, leadership, and improvement that Aeneas represents. Finally, these structural allusions clue the reader to the similarity in Satan and Aeneas' journeys; as Lewalski writes, "like Aeneas who set forth from Sicily with a small remnant, leaving behind as settlers all those 'with no craving for high renown,' so Satan set forth alone from hell to seek a better kingdom" (58). Thus, the text compares Satan's leadership with Aeneas' plight, his strength and his courage. The narration, however, perverts these values. Obviously, the description of the fallen angels and the content of Satan's speeches condoning open warfare against God both serve as contradictions to the literary

values; but an even more antithetical construction comes through the narrative description of Satan's journey. When we read Satan's acceptance speech:

Wherefore do I assume
These Royalties, and not refuse to Reign,
Refusing to accept as great a share
Of hazard as of honour, due alike
To him who Reigns, and so much to him due
Of hazard more, as he above the rest
High honourd sits?...
While I abroad
Through all the Coasts of dark destruction seek
Deliverance for us all: this enterprise
None shall partake with me (450-466)

We are cognizant of his self-sacrificial display of the heroic characteristics of his literary leadership. At the same time, Satan's journey perverts the Aeneid model. Satan, while portraying himself as self-sacrificing, does not accept the challenge for the good of the others but for his own empowerment, as seen when he "rose... and prevented all reply... least from his resolution rais'd others among the chief might offer now" (2.466-469). Also, Satan's journey does not construct a new kingdom, but rather it destroys the paradise God creates; and Satan's journey intends to undermine God's intentions unlike Aeneas' goal of completing the gods' plan. Thus, the two constructions of Satan create a dissonance within their portrayal of the heroic leadership. The literary construction places Satan amongst classic heroes, while the narrative provides Satan's perversion of these classic models. The dissonance, then constructs the Satanic ethos as a rejection of the heroic standard.

The text also constructs Satan as a heroic warrior. The two scenes already discussed, the battle with Michael and the war taunt, portray Satan's physical might and military stature respectively. Physically, the text constructs Satan through literary conventions of epic hyperbole, analogy and allusion. These techniques elevate Satan's physical grandeur beyond the heroes of Homer's epics, thus informing his character with the "fortitude, determination, endurance, and leadership of the greatest epic heroes" (Lewalski 57). As discussed, however, the narration describes Satan's subsequent loss to both Abdiel and Michael, deflating his heroism and strength. The narration furthers Satan's inadequacy by equating his conquerors' strength resulting from "the Cause of Truth" and "the Armorie of God," respectively, informing Satan's weakness with moral perversion (6.32, 6.321). The dissonance between these two constructions reveals the Satanic ethos' failure to meet classic heroic values. We see a different ethos in the constructions of Satan's heroic behavior in battle. Through the conventional war taunt, the poem places Satan amongst the epic warriors, following quite directly the structured battle scene. Again, however, the content of Satan's taunt displays a gross perversion of military etiquette into cruelty and deception. In addition to the ethos created by this perversion, the narrative depiction of the pain Satan causes the other angels and the pleasure he takes in this pain evoke an emotional response against the fallen angels. In this case, then, the dissonance between the literary and narrative constructions of Satan as a warrior conveys another failure to reach rhetorical ethos, as well as a rejection of rhetorical pathos.

The final heroic construction of Satan consists of the sequence Lewalski describes as Satan's declining tragic heroism. While this succession of "declining" literary forms marks several constructions of separate heroic types, it would be redundant to analyze each one. It will suffice, then, to look at the poem's construction of Satan's final construction within the tragic

hero archetype (as the next scene in this sequence constructs Satan as entirely outside of heroism). In Satan's soliloquy after witnessing Adam and Eve's expressions of mutual love, the poem constructs Satan within the genre of Elizabethan tragedy. Despite what Lewalski describes as his declination from more noble tragic heroes, Satan's soliloquy here still carries with it the literary significance in terms of his position in the poem, the often insightful and emotional confession, as well as the overall impact of the tragedy itself. Certainly, Satan's fall from Heaven to Hell, from grandeur to lowliness, emphasizes the emotional significance of the tragic mode as well. Of course, the narrative construction of Satan reveals his perversion of even the sadness he feels. His soliloquy begins with his expression of envy, "sight hateful, sight tormenting!" and describes his progressively more demonic emotions (4.505). He defiles the soliloquy, and thus his tragic heroism, with his expressions of jealousy, hate, and trickery. Although the content of his speech reflects the literary convention of the soliloquy—in this case of self-torment, angst, and a confession of one's intentions—Satan removes himself from the heroic soliloquy (i.e. Macbeth) to that of an evil antagonist, one such as Iago. Interestingly, in this soliloquy, the content of his speech does conform to literary convention in one aspect. His illogical inversion of virtue, as well as his irrational rejection of God's decrees (disguised as logic), coincides with the traditional tragic soliloquy that is characterized by its emotional and illogical progression. Thus, the narration, in this one instance, conforms to the literary construction; however, it is clear that this conformity informs Satan negatively. Ultimately, the constructive dissonance reveals a degradation of the Elizabethan tragedy; but more importantly, it marks a complete failure of Satan to fulfill the heroic standard. In this scene, Satan fails to reach ethos and pathos—by his perversion of the values of Elizabethan tragedy—and logos—by the actual narrative conformity to literary convention.

In all of these scenes of Satanic heroism, we observe distinct shifts in the dissonance between the literary and narrative constructions, from aggressive contradictions to subtle perversions to the convergence of the constructions. Despite its change throughout the poem, the persistence of this dissonance reveals a consistent trend in characterizing Satan. The poem characterizes him through this dissonance; and the literary constructions, while certainly informing Satan's role in the poem, seem to routinely give way to the ethical perversions of the Satanic narrative. We will return to this dissonant construction later, paying specific attention to its relevance to the Satanic role in Milton's rhetoric.

Other Satanic Ethoi: Although up to this point, I have discussed the construction of Satan as a hero, it is clear that the range of literary modes and genres informing Satan's character expand beyond the heroic. Furthermore, the constructions of Satan are not always literary, though they can still be separated into a formal construction and the narrative. In the following examples, I will explore two more distinct constructions of Satan: him as a speaker and his position within a larger cosmos. In either case, it is important to note that these constructions remain distinct from and, as we shall see, in opposition to the narrative construction.

In terms of Satan's speaking, Barbara Lewalski discusses how the text constructs Satan similarly to how it constructs him as a hero. The formal constructions of the Satanic discursive mode are "deliberative rhetoric and soliloquy: true lyrics are outside [his] repertoire; and other kinds such as dialogue and lament take on the characteristics of the dominant genres [of rhetoric and soliloquy]" (80). Thus, episodes of Satanic lament become degraded soliloquy, and Satanic dialogue falls to manipulative rhetoric. For instance, Satan's first discussion with Beelzebub, echoes many consultations between epic heroes and their friends wherein the leaders seek and heed the advice of their comrades. The heroic allusions and literary constructions discussed earlier already prompt the reader to make the connection between Satan and Beelzebub's dialogue with those of

Achilles and Patroklos, for example. As he proceeds to speak, however, we see a stark dissonance between the structure of his discourse and its content.

His opening lament, already noted for its literary allusion to Aeneas, evokes a form of discourse associated with a hero's anagnorisis and the accompanying emotional turmoil. Structurally speaking, then, this dialogue between Satan and Beelzebub marks a realization of their fallen state and their mutual lament at the given circumstances; and by doing so, the dialogic form constructs Satan and Beelzebub to be heroes, equating them with heroic precedent. Additionally, the structure of their dialogue itself engages them in a collaborative means of seeking knowledge. The content of their dialogue, however, perverts both of these values. In the case of the heroic anagnorisis, the content of Satan's lament degrades the heroic values given him by the structure of his speech. By calling his rebellion, "the Glorious Enterprize," or God, "the Potent Victor," Satan's speech seems to conform to structured lament (I.89, 95). However, given Satan's clear inversion of morality in these statements, we can understand the narrative construction of Satan's speech as demonstrative of his perverse rhetoric. The content, then, marks a clear degradation from heroic lament to a failed pathos. Furthermore, the narrative describes Satan's blatant manipulation of his discussion with Beelzebub, another indication of his perversion of the higher form of dialogue. In their first exchange, for example, Satan lays the foundation for their discussion, their immortal hate; Beelzebub responds with doubt; and Satan concludes that they must gather the fallen angels and resume their struggle against God (I.84-191). Thus, as a heroic consult, Satan's control of the dialogue perverts the collaboration exuded by the discussion's structure.

We see this dissonance continue in the following, more explicitly structured dialogue in Hell: the war consultation. With an introduction that evokes epic precedent through a Homeric catalogue of the fallen angels, the text constructs the discussion in Pandemonium as a conventional epic war consult. This construction differs from the earlier literary constructions in terms of the dialogue's structure. Satan's opening statement, "we may debate; who can advise may speak," invites the following discussion to follow a distinct dialectic process (1.42). Indeed, structurally, the dialogue does just that. Moloch is the first to respond, and several of the other fallen angels take their turns refuting and building upon one another's ideas (1.43-283). The narrative, however, reveals Satan's manipulation of the entire discourse; Beelzebub's response to Mammon is "first devis'd by Satan, and in part propos'd" (1.379-80). In terms of the effect on the overall dialogue, this narrative construction of the scene perverts the dialectic structure to merely another extension of the Satanic rhetoric. These two perversions of Satanic speech, his lament and his dialectic, further characterize the Satanic ethos as a perversion of classical models of value. As with the literary constructions of Satan—that provided heroic precedent in terms of ethical, emotional or even logical standards—these structured dialogues provide similar models that the narrative constructions of Satan pervert. Accordingly, this perversion informs the Satanic ethos with a distinct inversion of the rhetorical devices of ethos, pathos, and logos.

One final construction of Satan is that of his position in a larger cosmos. The poem itself constructs Satan as one of its protagonists. Certainly, the introductory invocation places importance on Satan's character, as do the several books in which he remains the dominant figure of interest. Furthermore, the reader first views Hell, Earth, even Adam and Eve through the perspective of Satan. In spite of this important position he holds within the poem, Satan boasts a quite powerless role in the larger cosmos *Paradise Lost* constructs. The first case of this comes when Satan meets Death and Sin. Sin tells Death and Satan, "What fury O Son [Death], Possesses thee to bend that mortal Dart Against they Fathers head? and know'st for whom; for him who sits above and laughs the while At thee ordain'd his drudge, to execute What e're his wrath, which he calls Justice, bids, His wrath which one day will destroy ye both" (2.728-734). Sin's clear

warning to Satan reveals his weakness within the supernatural realm. He cannot survive a battle with his son, and the death-match between these two only serves God's larger justice. The protagonist of this story, at least of the first two Books, does not maintain the cosmic eminence that he exudes in the literary realm. Furthering this dissonance, Satan's journey through Chaos also belittles his prominence within the poem. In addition to the sheer power Chaos and Night exude over Satan, it is only by pure chance that Satan survives his journey from Hell. We read, "Ten thousand fathom deep, and to this hour Down had been falling, had not by ill chance The strong rebuff of som tumultuous cloud... hurried him As many miles aloft" (2.934-937). Both Satan's insignificance in comparison to Chaos and Night and pure luck by which he survives his journey indicate higher forces beyond his own capacity. While not devastating in terms of the poem's larger order of nature, these scenes serve to remind the reader of Satan's ultimate fallibility in regard to divinity. Certainly, the resulting dissonance between Satan's position in the play and his position in the cosmos reflects a weakness in his characterization.

The conclusion of Satan's story emphasizes this fact. Upon returning to Hell and sharing his success with the fallen angels, Satan "stood, expecting Thir universal shout and high applause To fill his eare, when contrary he hears... A dismal universal hiss, the sound Of public scorn; he wondered, but not long Had leasure, wondring at himself now more... A monstrous Serpent on his Belly prone, Reluctant, but in vaine, a greater power Now rul'd him, punisht in the shape he sin'd" (10.504-516). In this scene, the conclusive impact of Satan's victory falls short to the narrative construction of his position within the cosmos. Again, despite the significance these events have on other characters and the story as a whole, the narrative makes quite clear Satan's powerlessness within a larger scope of the natural order. He is completely powerless to God, a fact that no temporary success, regardless of its impact on humanity, can disprove. The dissonance between the structural construction of his protagonist role and the narrative belittling of his cosmic position certainly deflates the grandeur associated with the former.

Ultimately, this dissonance in Satan's construction reflects the persisting trend throughout the poem: its structural elevation of Satan and the subsequent narrative degradation of his character. Certainly, as mentioned, these moments of dissonance mark Satan's inability to reach ethos, pathos or logos. This fact is not surprising given the moral perspective of the poem; but more importantly, these moments indicate the failure of the literary and textual constructions to ascribe to the poem's overall moral argument. More so than Satan's inability as a character, the Satanic dissonance reveals the inadequacies of the rhetorical vocabulary informed by literary and textual forms.

Rhetorical Incompetence: The rhetorical vocabulary, of course, refers to Barbara Lewalski's concept of the literary mode of construction; which she defines as a series of literary forms that creates a rhetorical vocabulary of accumulated cultural value and significance. Ultimately, it is the vocabulary of literary forms that we see imparting heroic value onto Satan through epic convention; or the vocabulary of dialogic forms that informs the consult in Hell with values of collaboration and dialectic learning. Of course, as the previous section illustrates, the dissonance between these and the narrative constructions questions the validity of such rhetorical vocabularies. Thus we must conclude by analyzing the moments of dissonance with particular regard to the rhetorical incompetence of the textual constructive modes. Though I have discussed three modes of textual construction (heroic, speaker, and cosmic), it will suffice to explore the heroic mode as representative of the latter two.

The most obvious moments of Satanic dissonance arise precisely due to the competing constructions of the Satanic heroic ethos. On the one hand, the literary construction of Satan employs an extensive rhetorical vocabulary of literary values and significance. As we discussed,

the epic conventions of Homeric catalogue, epic hyperbole and description all inform Satan's character with heroic grandeur and might. The conventional invocation elevates Satan to the role of hero and positions him within the text's epic of wrath and strife. In these instances of literary construction, we see the rhetorical vocabulary profoundly influence Satan's character with a wealth of literary models and precedent. Of course, the dissonant narrative construction, as we discussed, informs Satan's ethical nature quite differently. It begins the poem by aggressively contradicting the literary construction in the invocation, and the narrative proceeds to construct Satan as either a degradation or perversion of the values given by the literary rhetorical vocabulary. Ultimately, the narrative construction consistently assumes the dominant expression of the Satanic heroic ethos. This is not to say that the narrative construction completely characterizes Satan; but rather that the text constructs Satan as a departure from the literary construction, and subsequently the rejection of the values and significance this construction carries. Thus, the dissonance that characterizes the Satanic heroic ethos marks the rhetorical incompetence of the vocabulary of literary forms.

Not surprisingly, we see a similar trend in the Satanic pathos and logos. With the construction of Satan as a tragic hero through the conventional soliloquy, the literary construction calls upon a vocabulary of distinct dramatic models. These models inform Satan's character with a range of tragic emotion and value. In most soliloquies, the narrative form marks a steady degradation of these literary constructions whereby Satan fails to reach emotional pathos and actually declines as a tragic hero. In his final soliloquy, however, the dissonance between the narrative and literary constructions dissipates. Of course, in this case, the literary form constructs Satan as a tragic antagonist, and the narrative conforms to the values of irrationality and rashness; and both of these values contradict the logic Satan attempts to portray. In either case, the vocabulary of tragic values is characterized by Satan's distinct failures to attain pathos and logos. We can trace, from these moments of Satanic dissonance, the literary mode of construction's consistent inability to successfully participate in the Miltonic rhetoric.

Rise to Dialect: The implications of this rhetorical incompetence are, to some degree, limited. Given the critical response to Satan's character and the wide interest in his heroism, we know that the vocabulary of the literary modes and genres of epic heroism is relevant to perceptions of Satan. Therefore, this incompetence does not imply that the vocabulary of literary forms is invalid; nor does it imply that the narrative construction simply overrides the literary. The rhetorical incompetence does suggest, however, that the constructions provide the vocabulary for two separate and competing dialogues in a larger dialectic system. That is to say, what we discussed as incompetence in one mode of expression really points to the incompetence of our view; it is not the constructive mode that is limited but the perception of Milton's rhetoric as singular. Instead, both the narrative and the textual constructive modes provide rhetorical dialogues that constantly interact. The former is characterized by the poem's plot and the sequence therein; and the latter is characterized by the accumulated cultural significance(s) it carries.

When Lewalski discusses Milton's rhetorical dialogue with the reader, she discusses his "pedagogic ideal in *Of Education*, advancing his readers' understanding through a literary regimen at once intellectually demanding and delightful" (Lewalski 8). The same can be argued for the Miltonic dialect, which is the mere expansion of Lewalski's original critical focus. By expanding the construction of Satan's character, we find a dissonance that engages the reader in a system of rhetorical vocabularies, associated values, and a more comprehensive sense of morality. Certainly this system demands the reader be knowledgeable of a great deal of literature, as Milton alludes to a wide panoply of literary forms and references. With this in mind, the moral ambiguity of Satan does not mark authorial ambiguity, but rather the engagement of the reader in

a textual dialect of morality. The separate constructions of Satan and their dissonance embody the role of evil in discerning truth Milton discusses in much of his other works.

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