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‘Held By Thy Voice’: Navigating Time In John Milton’s Poetry

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‘HELD BY THY VOICE’: NAVIGATING TIME IN JOHN MILTON’S POETRY

by

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Cesar and Merri,
with gratitude and all my love

For Stephen, the most
beautiful sound
I’ve ever
heard
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am beyond grateful to have worked with David Lee Miller on this project, to have taken his seminars, and to have been a part of The Spenser Review. All of these experiences shaped my writing and my understanding of the Renaissance, as well as how I see myself as a writer. Dr. Miller, you empowered me to take ownership of this project. Thank you for your wisdom and insight and for providing me the time and resources I needed to finish. You have been quick to answer my questions and patient with my writing; you have seen the potential for who I might be and cheered me on along the way. Chapter 4 is dedicated to you: when I took both seminars on Spenser, I’d hoped to write about how he makes use of his precursors but didn’t yet feel like I’d said what I wanted to say. Five years later, I read Paradise Regained and a footnote prompted me to (re)turn to The Faerie Queene. I had confidence to do so because of those seminars. I began reading Spenser as Milton’s precursor in the way that I’d hoped to re-ad Spenser and his precursors during those first few years. The experience was richly rewarding! I will take all of these experiences forward me with into my future reading, teaching, and writing.

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Stephen, thank you for brightening everything.
ABSTRACT

My dissertation, “‘Held by Thy Voice’: Navigating Time in John Milton’s Poetry” explores how and to what extent John Milton uses the formal device of suspension in “Lycidas,” Paradise Lost, and Paradise Regained. I argue that by using suspension, Milton negotiates between multiple categories of time. These moments are important because they highlight characters’ perspectives and expose the limitations of their viewpoints. Milton also employs suspension to introduce potential scenarios that reveal characters to be out of step with a providential framework. He uses suspension to connect two or more temporal categories and to reveal an individual’s position in relation to his or her moment in time, a relationship that Marshall Grossman in Authors to Themselves terms “historical consciousness.” In moments of suspension, temporal categories are often at odds with one another. While some critics have noticed suspension operating in Milton’s poetry, they have not fully considered how it illuminates Milton’s conception of time. In my argument, form is central to understanding the relationship between various temporal constructs and the way Milton makes them his own. Tracing Milton’s pauses provides us the opportunity to understand how form is working to illustrate point of view, how point of view functions within the plot, and the extent to which characters’ perceptions of their roles are often outside the boundaries of right action and good timing.
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INTRODUCTION

“The face we put on the devil is our own,” David Quint writes in his 2014 monograph, Inside Paradise Lost. “[It is] a fiction projected by the mythmaking, human mind,” he adds (30). Remarking on book 1, Quint turns from a close analysis of two key similes, the “sea-beast / Leviathan” and the “faerie elves,” to draw attention to the readers’ awareness of the fallen perspective. These comparisons convey the power of Milton’s poetry to “raise” the devils, yet the similes urge us to consider the very form that Milton employs (30). Quint continues, “the devils are similarly the product of the words of the poem itself . . . Once raised, these devils are hard to put to rest or to return to airy nothing: back to the words on the page. For if Paradise Lost self-consciously reduces to a war of words, Milton’s own words are at war with themselves” (34). Insofar as Quint connects reader and fallen perspective, and reader and text, Quint’s underlying point here is crucial, even if it is not the primary focus of his book. He prompts us to ask how Milton’s formal choices—“the words of the poem”—spur us to witness, and even inhabit, the fallen imagination. Poetry spotlights the subjective experience, and in doing so, calls attention to its own quality of being made by a subject, in time—and subject to imperfection. “What dreams may come” from participating in this fiction must, indeed, “give us pause” (Hamlet III.i.66, 68). If we take the question about Milton’s formal choices one step further, we might ask what specific verbal patterns does Milton use to represent subjectivity, fallen and unfallen alike. Why would Milton ask us to consider
these patterns? What does this say about Milton’s expectations of his readers, as well as his role as a poet?

Milton’s specific use of language closes the distance between the reader and the fallen subject; this is an idea central to my project. Quint goes on to say that the poem “labels the fiction about Satan that follows in Paradise Lost as a fiction, a matter, we might say, of suspended belief” (34, emphasis mine). After Satan’s expectations rise, he remembers his broken relationship with God, and those anticipations are not fulfilled—this suspension occurs at the level of the plot (narrative action). For the purposes of my project, I trace a different kind of suspension, in which Milton uses word choice to raise expectations that are not fulfilled. As a result, he dramatizes a subject’s perspective. Formal suspension is a technique in which the language of the poem leads us to anticipate one thing, and then interrupts those expectations or complicates them so that they cannot be resolved as we might have originally thought. Within the passages, Milton’s formal choices compel us to slow down. While formal suspension does sometimes overlap in scenes of narrative suspension, I focus on how the language is working in formally suspended moments to highlight Milton’s conception of temporality, especially the subject’s experience both of time and in time. If Milton’s suspensions in Paradise Lost magnify the fallen consciousness of Satan, they also highlight the not-yet-fallen consciousness of Adam and Eve, as well as their post-lapsarian point of view.

In this project, I trace formal suspension, and its opposite, synchronicity, in three of Milton’s poetic achievements, “Lycidas” (1638), Paradise Lost (1674), and Paradise Regained (1671). In each text, I closely examine suspension and synchronicity to argue for how and to what extent these elements work together to illuminate larger categories of
time. I define formal suspension by looking at several elements: enjambment, negation, conditional statements, hypotheticals, suspension of syntax (when prepositional phrases or clauses separate subjects from their verbs), and colons or semicolons that stall our forward progress. Most often, a passage of suspension includes a number of these characteristics, rather than just one. Not all moments of suspension are grammatically alike: while some moments use a combination of all of the elements, others may have only two or three characteristics. In terms of their significance, suspended passages display categories of time in conflict with one another. Another verbal pattern Milton deploys contrasts suspension; I term this pattern synchronicity, which occurs when no action is delayed beyond what we would expect, and formal elements allow us to move forward without obstruction. If negation, conditional statements, or hypotheticals occur, they do not reverse or overturn what we anticipate. Importantly, passages of synchronicity demonstrate that temporal categories are able to come together simultaneously. In such moments, formal elements, literal subjects, and categories of time are in accord with one another.

While explaining Milton’s formal choices is a core part of my argument, I analyze suspension and synchronicity to describe how Milton invites readers to make sense of temporal categories. With suspension, Milton prompts us to see how temporal categories are at odds with one another; with synchronicity, he connects temporal categories to display their simultaneity. As readers pause to recognize these passages and work through their significance, readers may respond in several ways. Often, Milton uses suspension to introduce a subject’s experience in time and of time, so that we can consider alternatives to a divine perspective; these alternatives are fallen, illusory (and
mesmerizing) storylines that could occur and might contend with divine truth. Because of these delays, we are encouraged to weigh the possible scenarios that are presented to us. Synchronicity, on the other hand, depicts an alignment of temporal categories, such as history and providence, history and eternity, and subjective time and providence. For example, synchronicity might illustrate how a historical event is connected to God’s overarching plan for humankind, how a historical event can be relevant to one’s position in eternity, or how one’s experience of time can incorporate a view of providence. Unlike suspension, synchronicity provides us opportunities to imagine that larger temporal categories can exist in harmony with one another.

The categories of time that I assess are subjective temporality, history, cyclical time, the apocalypse (which I define as a subcategory of providence, since it marks the end of linear time), eternity, and providence. While subjective temporality does refer to the personal sense of time’s movement, such as its slowness and speed, I am especially interested in how suspension lends awareness to a subject as he or she makes sense of his or her “relation of the self to time,” which Marshall Grossman terms “historical consciousness” (6). In Authors to Themselves, Grossman suggests that the historical consciousness operating in Paradise Lost modeled that conceptions of time were changing in the seventeenth century—that individuals were beginning to view their lives from the standpoint of historical time. To understand one’s temporal position, one must take into account both “typology and narrative” (Grossman 18), in which an individual connects his individual story to Biblical history and the Bible: “The Christian view of history, reaching back to creation and forward to the apocalypse, provides the model according to which the apparent contingencies encountered in the temporal unfolding of
individual human experience may be rendered meaningful” (10). For the reader of
Paradise Lost, and in the seventeenth century, the determining events in linear time were
Christ’s actions: “Mediating individual destiny and collective destiny—life history and
world history—are the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and second coming of Christ . . .
. The individual Christian is then situated at the point where prolepsis and analepsis
cross; he or she performs acts from within time that are to be evaluated sub specie
aeternitatis” (10). The Christian experiences time as a subject, from his or her own point
of view, and appraises actions from a historical, as well as eternal, standpoint. Grossman
adds, “This rhetorical crossing or chiasmus is made historical by Christ’s cross, on which
the temporal and eternal realms are materially joined for all time by a sacrificial act
performed within time” (10). Christ’s actions effect the simultaneity of temporal
structures: his death brings together earthly, linear time and eternity. Using even more
familiar terms, Frank Kermode summarizes the difference between calendric time and the
moment of “rhetorical crossing” that Grossman finds so crucial for Milton’s readers:
“chronos is ‘passing time’ or ‘waiting time’—that which, according to Revelation, ‘shall
be no more,’ and kairos is the season, a point in time filled with significance, charged
with a meaning derived from its relation to the end” (47). Anthony Welch remarks on the
importance of temporal structures in the epic: “God’s providential plan, as well as
Milton’s epic, turns on our changing relationship with time. The poem’s chronological
templates play a part in that process, rendering the tragedy of mortal fallibility after the
Fall, [and] the intricate dance of divine kairos and human chronos . . .” (16).
Seasonal, or calendric time suggests to us that time is moving, whereas Kairos signifies
an event towards which time moves, an event that ends cyclical (seasonal) and historical
time. Unlike Christ’s death, in which history and eternity converge, his return at the apocalypse signifies the end of history. For that reason, I see the apocalypse as providential and as the end to historical time. Recently, Ryan Netzley defined the apocalypse as “the end of mediated relational meaning, but also the end of the arrival of imminent meaning—because an immanent meaning without deferral or difference is right here, now” (10). For the reader who has only the present, he must make sense of his life as it relates to history, eternity, and the apocalypse. Kermode writes,

> We make sense of the past as of a book or a psalm we have read or recited, and of the present as a book the seals of which we shall see opened; the only way to do this is to project fears and guesses and inferences from the past onto the future. St. Augustine described the condition in his *Confessions*. The moments we call crises are ends and beginnings. We are ready, therefore, to accept all manner of evidence ours is a genuine end, a genuine beginning. We accept it, for instance, from the calendar. (Kermode 96)

For us, seasonal cycles, as well as Biblical texts and Christ’s actions, mark the firsts and lasts that we experience. We are left with only the present, in which we must work out our position in time.

My first chapter traces these patterns in Milton’s “Lycidas,” his third published poem where I argue that he uses suspension to highlight the disjuncture between temporal categories, and that he employs synchronicity to show how these categories might be reconciled.¹ Milton seeks to bridge seasonal, historical, and providential timelines with

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¹ “Lycidas” was the first poem Milton published that he acknowledged; his initials “J.M.” mark his identity. Milton’s two earlier works to appear in print did not bear his name.
the arc of his narrative career, which has only just begun. Because the first sentence is a paradigm for his temporal vision, Milton outlines his attitude towards time in relation to literary history. I demonstrate the extent to which Milton’s first sentence reworks the “December” eclogue and closing envoy from Edmund Spenser’s *The Shepheardes Calender*. Milton models his conception of time on Spenser’s point of view, which we clearly see at end of Spenser’s poem. In the “December” eclogue, Spenser portrays Colin Clout’s incorrect point of view on his art. Because he measures his lack of success by looking at the calendar year, he assumes he has failed as a poet. But Spenser disrupts Colin’s limited, seasonal perspective with the brief envoy that follows the poem:

Immerito uses eternity and the apocalypse, the end of historical time, as a reference point. Immerito has “made” a “Calender for every year,” and it will “continewe til the worlds dissolution” (1, 4). Widening his temporal lens in this way, Immerito encourages readers and future poets alike to hold a panoramic view of this text and the poetry it will inspire.

If in “Lycidas,” Milton strives to hold a Spenserian-inspired position on his art’s power, he models his temporal moves on Spenser’s shift from the seasons to larger temporal registers. By examining suspension, in which Milton makes such moves, we can see that he hopes to avoid two key poetic (and temporal) failures. As one failure, Colin Clout evaluates his efforts with an incorrect, seasonal point of view, thereby assuming he has lost any chance for being celebrated as a poet; as another failure, Virgil’s Orpheus relies on his subjective experience and, as a result, loses his beloved Eurydice forever. Afraid of these two outcomes, not achieving renown in history (as a poet) and not maintaining power over himself (as a subject), Milton steps back, using suspension to

They were “On Shakespeare,” which was published in the second folio of 1632, and *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle* in 1637, Evans, p. 47.
show the gap between historical and subjective experiences. Ultimately, Milton maintains the kind of vision Spenser champions at the end of the *Calender*. But Milton diverges from Spenser in the way he privileges eternity: for Milton, eternity offers the hope that it might reconcile other temporal categories, including history, to itself. At the close of “Lycidas,” Milton, like Spenser, shatters the present of the narrative to suggest it is a completed event in history and the first of many more. This rupture may be compared to Spenser’s move in the envoy, yet Milton goes one step further: he brings together subjective, diurnal, and historical time in the closing lines, but excludes from them the apocalypse and eternity.

While my first chapter considers how formal delays in “Lycidas” disrupt our reading experience of a brief lyric poem, in my next two chapters, I examine how Milton even more completely develops a panoramic vision of time and a subject’s point of view in *Paradise Lost*’s epic narrative form. Because of the epic’s landscape, historical setting (the fall of humankind), and spiritual underpinnings, the work richly supports Milton’s extended recourse to suspension and synchronicity. Whereas “Lycidas” suggests eternity can connect temporal categories (at least, before the disruptive closure), in this text, providence connects different types of time. Prior to humankind’s fall, Milton’s suspensions showcase the fallen point of view in Hell, in Chaos, and on nearly fallen Eden. In Heaven and pre-lapsarian Eden, Milton inserts synchronicity so that readers might imagine the harmony possible between larger temporal categories—an accord that defies the limitations of Satan’s point of view. Even more significantly, Milton uses suspension to flesh out his vision of a subject’s experience as unfallen or fallen, in which
that subject strives to understand his position in relationship to cyclical time, history, eternity, and providence.

In chapter 2, I closely read suspensions and synchronicity that occur before the fall of humankind (in books 1-7 of *Paradise Lost*). Specifically, I illustrate the extent to which these patterns reveal differing points of view: Adam, Satan, the fallen and unfallen angels, the narrator, and Eve. These passages draw readers’ attention to characters as they sort out their position in time and relation to God, so that we might compare their experiences. Fallen subjects experience time with a distorted point of view, and envision alternative possibilities that miss God’s providence: in Chaos, Satan stands on the edge, pausing before moving forward with his plan to destroy mankind. Marked by conditional language, his fall presages history, because his decision instigates the circumstances that begin it. In Hell, because the fallen angels long to experience an end to their pain, they imagine Satan’s return as an event that will change their condition, but their point of view mistakes eternity for what it is not. In another example, the narrator, inspired by the choirs of Heaven, is able to incorporate multiple temporalities simultaneously. With synchronicity, he weaves together eternity and history, and history and providence, so that we might imagine the way they intertwine. Yet the narrator will struggle to reconcile history and providence in the opening to book 4. On earth, synchronicity demonstrates how diurnal time exists in harmony with providence. Unfallen Adam and Eve experience time subjectively and perfectly, without a full understanding of providence, history, or eternity. Once in Eden, Satan ruptures the diurnal cycles Adam and Eve have enjoyed, and he ushers in alternatives to their not-yet-fallen perspectives; although Raphael’s presence interrupts Adam and Eve’s daily schedule, he provides examples of providence
so that they might avoid temptation. Although Raphael explains Adam and Eve’s position of obedience, Adam’s responses to Raphael suggest that Adam does not completely grasp the concept. Adam’s replies make us question how, in his perfect subjectivity, he fails to understand his position of obedience. The angelic interruptions stress Satan’s, Adam’s, and Eve’s subjective points of view.

Chapter 3 explores how suspensions and synchronicity dramatize God’s plan for mankind, Adam and Eve’s perception of their roles, and, after the fall, the human experience (books 7-12). Leading up to the fall, suspension suggests that alternative storylines conflict with God’s providence; after the fall, suspension signifies how Adam’s and Eve’s historical consciousness has shifted. I first analyze God’s use of hypothetical and conditional wording, communicated by Raphael, to show how God’s language underlines his providence. In book 9, suspension begins to appear in Eve’s language as she contemplates alternative storylines beyond her role in Eden. Prior to their separation scene, she and Adam misunderstand one another precisely because they begin to entertain thoughts of what “might” be, or what “could” happen. After the fall, Adam and Eve lapse into conditional and hypothetical language, which demonstrates their ruptured harmony with one another. By examining their language in these instances, I show that Milton is exhibiting the conflict between subjectivity and history, and subjectivity and providence.

In chapter 3, I also demonstrate how synchronicity serves a restorative purpose in books 11 and 12, where it signifies that humans can incorporate providence into their subjective point of view. Following their disobedience, Adam and Eve must learn how to view history and providence from their imperfect perspectives. When Michael arrives in book 11 to take Adam and Eve from the garden, Milton turns to synchronicity to
communicate the power of providence: Adam can attune his fallen subjectivity to divine foresight, eternity, and history.

Chapter 4 traces these verbal patterns in *Paradise Regained*, where satanic subjectivity scales an all-time high. Satan’s slanted reading of truth is paramount in this poem. I begin by reading Satan’s perception of Jesus’s baptism, which occurs early and models the suspensions that follow it. During key moments of the temptation, Satan uses suspension to present alternative storylines to Jesus, so that he might swerve from a right understanding of God and disobey him. Although synchronicity is less evident in this poem, some passages portray Jesus as a figure who can connect diurnal time, history, and providence. Jesus holds a vision of temporality in which categories come together simultaneously, and in his person, he is able to reconcile differing categories together.

After analyzing Satanic suspension and moments of synchronicity in the poem, I read the climactic scene when Satan places Jesus on the pinnacle of Jerusalem. To explain this moment, I look to Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, book II, canto xi, as a crucial influence on Milton’s text. I argue for the extent to which Spenser’s Arthur and Maleger episode is a key source for this decisive moment in the poem. By demonstrating how Milton revises the pauses in Spenser’s episode, I underscore the limits of satanic subjectivity, which does not incorporate a providential perspective. Although a divine point of view is missing from Satan’s fall, the narrator ultimately uses suspension to portray Jesus’s power in historical time because of providence. As the greater Hercules and Orpheus, Jesus emerges as a historical figure who can incorporate a vision of providence into his subjectivity, something we only began to see Adam experience in book 11 of *Paradise Lost*. 
CHAPTER 1

SPENSER’S SHEPHEARDES CALENDER:

MILTON’S STARTING POINT FOR TEMPORALITY IN “LYCIDAS”

Edmund Spenser’s Shepheardes Calender (1579) was the first poem Spenser published and the first of its kind in English. As a pastoral text that anticipated Spenser’s epic, it signaled the poet’s step towards a Virgilian career. In 1637, another “new poete,” John Milton, similarly began his own career with a pastoral poem that would look forward to his later epic. While critics have observed that the Calendar is an important precursor to “Lycidas,” and that Milton imitates Spenser’s moves by beginning his career with a pastoral poem, I will specifically suggest that Spenser’s December and the envoy

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2 Richard Helgerson describes the importance of Spenser’s Calendar, which served to establish Spenser as the first English poet, and laureate poet, of his day, p. 100. See his chapter “The New Poete Presents Himself,” where he writes of Spenser’s achievement in the Calendar, “England lacked a poet . . . there was no English Homer or Virgil, no English Ariosto or Ronsard . . . But now, at last, the English poet had appeared,” p. 68. David Lee Miller writes that the text “seeks to establish, in Elizabethan culture, a special public role for its author, a role in which he can realize his sense of poetic vocation,” p. 229. David Norbrook, who explores the religious undertones of Spenser’s work says, “No new collection of English poems before The Shepheardes Calender had provided such an array of aids to interpretation: a preface, general and particular arguments, woodcuts, and lengthy glosses,” p. 66. See also Syrithe Pugh.

3 William Oram asserts, “E.K.’s excited, laudatory epistle to The Shepheardes Calender announces that its author follows in the path of his great European predecessors, presumably starting with pastoral to end in epic, and, at the opening of The Faerie Queene, Spenser insists on that Virgilian succession,” p. 332. He continues, “Both E.K.’s epistle and Spenser’s initial invocation to book 1 set him up as England’s new poet, its hope of a new Virgil.”

4 See the “Title Page” to Spenser’s Calendar, where E.K. calls the Calendar’s author a “new Poete,” McCabe, p. 25.
serve as the critical contexts for Milton’s conception of time in “Lycidas.” Roger Kuin and Anne Lake Prescott prompt readers to discover these kinds of echoes between the two authors. Of Milton, they write, “The study of poetry made him a poet; the absorbed reading, the rapt marking, the profound learning and the inwardly digesting of poetry—of Spenser’s poetry . . . made him a sage and serious man” (78-79). Kuin and Prescott help us to envision Spenser’s profound effect on Milton’s development as both a poet and a person. In response, we might ask to what end Milton remakes the poetry that “made him,” and in particular, how he reshapes the first poem that made his “Original” an author.

If Spenser’s pastoral poem achieved such success in its time, and suggested the poet would be the next Virgil, it is no surprise that Milton would look to it as this kind of a model for this, his third poem to be published (Evans 47). In his recent chapter on “Lycidas,” Raphael Lyne describes how the poem’s critical heritage only opens up the possibilities for what one might say about it: “Earlier critics have done enough work on the complexities of this poem to make it clear that future critics will discover more” (59).

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5 Joseph Anthony Wittreich says, “The major traditions Milton invokes are pastoral and prophecy; and Milton’s last major precursor in each of these traditions is Spenser,” Visionary Poetics, p. 105. D. M. Rosenberg compares “Lycidas” to Spenser’s “November” eclogue. See also Norbrook, Thomas Hubbard, and Dennis Kay, who writes of “Lycidas” that “Many pastoral writers have expressed concern that their writings should not be regarded as trivial and purely recreational; in the Proem to Book II of The Faerie Queene Spenser distinguishes his own writing (‘matter of just memorie’) from trivial works, ‘th’ abundance of an idle braine . . . painted forgerie.’ Milton takes pains to load his text with material that stretches its implications beyond the immediate,” p. 229.

6 See Stella Revard, who says, “‘Lycidas’ was written at a crucial moment in Milton’s career as a poet and in his development as a man—at a time of personal and political crisis,” p. 164.

7 Dryden stated that “Milton was the Poetical Son of Spencer. . . . Milton has acknowledged to me, that Spencer was his Original,” Cummings, p. 205.
When Lyne explores Milton’s use of his precursors in “Lycidas,” he notices that Milton’s word choice reflects Spenser’s language. Remarking on lines 149-51 in the flower catalogue, Lyne observes that Milton borrows “amaranthus,” “daffadillies,” and “laureate” from Spenser: “the triad amaranthus-daffadillies-laureate turns from an almost incidental detailed link with *The Faerie Queene*, emerging from a list, into a systematic and programmatic (if brief) assertion of the ambitions of ‘Lycidas’ in relation to an English literary tradition” (74). Like Lyne, I will suggest that Milton’s use of Spenser illustrates his poetic aspirations. Spenser’s *December* and the closing envoy elucidate two attitudes toward temporal categories: one that is close up and only looks to seasonal time, and one that is more distanced, in which the poet can envision history and the apocalypse. In “Lycidas,” Milton will, like Spenser, sort out the relationships between multiple temporal categories. I will show that Milton makes this Spenserian move: he distances himself from seasonal time and brings larger categories of time together to depict the relationships between temporal categories. If Milton is to understand how his career might achieve eternal renown, he must avoid the shortsighted view of two exemplars, that of Colin Clout and Orpheus. In this essay, I argue that Milton emulates his “original” in “Lycidas” to illustrate the kind of temporal point of view he hopes to have as a poet. In doing so, Milton suggests that this poem is the *Calendar* of his narrative career and that it will prepare his readers for the suspensions to follow in his epic *Paradise Lost*.

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8 Thomas Cain traces the importance of the “Renaissance Orpheus” to Spenser’s *Calendar*. He suggests that Colin, like other poets, is a descendant of Orpheus, p. 34.
Readers of Edmund Spenser’s *Shepheardes Calender* have described the poem’s closing envoy as the pivotal moment. The envoy follows the *December* eclogue, wherein Colin Clout approaches his death assuming that he has failed as a poet, yet Spenser does not end there. Instead, Spenser creates a textual and temporal rupture. In the envoy, Immerito shifts the reader from the poem’s immediate context—Colin’s perspective, limited by seasonal time—to a larger frame of reference that will incorporate history and eternity. David Lee Miller explains that in the epilogue, Spenser’s Immerito is “addressing us, across the centuries, to declare that his calendar rises above time to measure every year . . . The envoy . . . sponsor[s] an utterly impossible moment in which we as readers are ‘there’ with the author, stepping back to admire the poem we have just completed . . . the text points to its imaginary presence, shuttling itself backward to forecast and forward to recollect an unreal but familiar now” (758, 759). By placing the envoy after Colin’s lament in *December*, Spenser encourages readers to juxtapose the timeframe Colin sets for himself with other temporal categories: the future of the text, which includes linear history until the apocalypse. To highlight these categories, Spenser uses formal suspension.

The envoy provides a critical closing to the *Calender*, yet its anticipatory position contrasts Colin’s *December* lament. He bemoans his failed career in terms of seasonal time:

My boughs with bloosmes that crowned were at firste,

And promised of timely fruite such store

Are left both bare and barrein now at erst:

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9 See Miller 1993.
10 See note 6.
The flattering fruite is fallen to ground before,
And rotted, ere they were half mellow ripe:
My harvest wast, my hope away dyd wipe.\textsuperscript{11} (103-08)

This passage represents the way that nature has circumscribed Colin’s career narrative. If his anticipated fame is fruit that matures in season, his winter has arrived too soon, crushing his poetic aspirations. What he has longed for the most—to attain fame for his poetic art—will never come to fruition. At least, this is the situation as he imagines it, in the cold of winter, as his life approaches its end. What nature promised, it does not deliver. Colin’s hopes have been cut short: the fruits are destroyed “ere they were half mellow ripe.” Because Colin reads his career narrative through the lens of the cyclical year, he cannot imagine how his work might have value in other temporal categories. In this moment, Spenser brings together seasonal, subjective, and narrative temporal categories, yet he does so before revealing that Colin’s point of view is limited.

In the \textit{Calender’s} epilogue, the narrator Immerito offers an alternative reading of the text’s value in time. While Colin examines his work up close, the narrator zooms out:

Loe I have made a Calender for every yeare,
That steele in strength, and time in durance shall outweare:
And \textit{if} I marked well the starres revolution,
It shall continewe till the worlds dissolution. (1-4, emphasis added)

After alluding to the \textit{Calender’s} power to withstand the test of time, Spenser employs a colon, which delays our forward movement, as well the hypothetical “if I marked well . . .” (2, 3). Immerito offers a new perspective, and he asks us to take our time to consider it.

\textsuperscript{11} All references to \textit{The Shepheardes Calender} are from Edmund Spenser, \textit{The Shorter Poems}, edited by Richard A. McCabe.
The *Calendar* will last for all of time, at least until time ends: this is the part we learn, in advance of the colon—before Immerito qualifies his own response. Immerito is able to provide a new perspective precisely because he stops to step outside of the *Calendar’s* seasonal end. After suggesting his reading is subjective, Immerito pictures the text’s success in linear time until the apocalypse, “the worlds dissolution,” and with that, he offers a new vantage point. As George Moore describes, “Constructed in lock-step with the celestial motions, the *Calendar* perfectly measures out the years in its forward-directed march through history” (232). In doing so, it expresses a kind of precision lacking in early modern calendars: it is “unlike the Old Style calendar with its cumulative error” (Miller 226). Immerito’s hypothetical “if” alerts us that we are reading Immerito’s point of view, which is dissimilar to Colin’s own perspective; Immerito looks to temporal constructs outside of it. If Immerito is right, the *Calendar* will stand the test of time. Whatever limitations are inherent in his point of view, Immerito will estimate its eternal value, for it allows him to imagine what it might accomplish: it will “. . . teach the ruder shepheard how to feede his sheepe, / And from the falsers fraud his folded flocke to keepe” (5-6). Insofar as it guides readers to truth, and protects them from deception, Immerito envisions the kind of response his text will have.

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12 Moore analyzes Immerito’s assertion in order to question Immerito’s point of view on the *Calendar’s* success. Moore points out the imperfections of early modern calendars: “Yet there are good reasons to distrust this triumphant vision of perpetuity and its underlying model of temporality. The functionality of this calendar, according to Immerito, is based upon his observation of the ‘starres revolution.’ Yet, the 1570s proved a remarkably difficult time for tracking and predicting heavenly movements . . . As Alison Chapman points out, the calendar became so out-of-sync with the heavens in the 1570s that European leaders had to enact reforms. Chapman incisively notes that this problem would have made early modern people highly aware of the constructed and fallible nature of calendars” (233).

13 For Miller’s analysis on the way Immerito reflects Chaucer’s attitude of “humility,” see Miller 1979, p. 226.
When he predicts his text’s everlasting influence, Immerito presents his point of view as subjective, acknowledging his limitations in time, because he is modeling the perspective one should hold when regarding one’s literary influences. In the epilogue’s final lines, Immerito instructs his book, and his readers, to hold a particular attitude towards literary history:

Dare *not* to match thy pype with Tityrus hys style,

*Nor* with the Pilgrim that the Ploughman playde a whyle:

But followe them farre off, and their high steppes adore

The better please, the worse despise, I aske *nomore*. (9-12, emphasis mine)

The negations underscore the perspective poets ought not to have. In the first two lines, we hear how poets should not position themselves, and in the second two, we hear the posture poets should take. Immerito warns that poets must not closely compare themselves to their literary influences, as Colin has done. Instead, poets must see their work from a standpoint the keeps history and eternity in mind. Immerito encourages his readers to adopt his perspective: future poets should follow their precursors from a distance and at the same time reverence their lofty work. In short, future readers should imitate literary forbears from a distance even as they stand in awe of what previous poets have written. George Moore notices that Immerito’s charge to readers reflects two differing temporal positions: “The contradiction between these two commands disrupts the triumphant perpetuity suggested earlier in the poem. Now, the book’s journey into the future is coterminous with a quest into the past to follow in the tracks of its literary forebears. The book occupies a contradictory variety of temporal orientations, each with its own directionality” (233). At the end of the epilogue, Immerito pictures the text’s role
in linear history, even as he marks his own end: he asks “nomore.” Immerito, like his
book, becomes a part of the past. At the same time, his “nomore” is only the beginning of
his text’s power, for he has posited that it will remain until the apocalypse.

Juxtaposing “December” and the envoy, Spenser has modeled two different
responses to the text’s success, and in doing so, he asks us to compare Colin’s seasonal
viewpoint with Immerito’s more distanced point of view. In short, Spenser is bringing
together two subjective perspectives, one that temporality limits and one that is able to
have power in and over it. Colin models the close reading of one’s life and success in
terms of history and the seasons. His attention to the calendar year suggests he looks to
chronos to see if his art may have been successful. Because the end of the text anticipates
the end of his lifespan, we also identify him with linear time; he, like his art, is finite.
Both Colin and Immerito measure the success of their work, but only Immerito negotiates
the relationship between eternity and history, and literary history and his narrative career.
Immerito provides an expansive vision of himself as an artist and of his art: because he
can contemplate “every year,” he can be certain of his text’s eternal value, and that it will
outlast historical time. While Immerito mentions the “worlds dissolution”—the end of
linear history—he doesn’t fear it or anticipate a final judgment, in which God will
evaluate his art. Rather, he estimates his success in the “every year” of history to assume
that the Calendar will stand the test of time.

In “Lycidas,” Milton’s opening sentence specifically echoes the dual perspectives
on time from Spenser’s poem. Beginning with “Yet once more,” Milton stages the
moment as an interruption to Immerito’s “nomore,” and Colin’s winter:
Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never-sear,
I com to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forc’d fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.14 (1-5, emphasis added)

Milton’s repetition, enjambment, and suspension of syntax stand out here. Opening with “Yet once more,” Milton clearly locates himself in Spenser’s linear framework even as he makes this moment his own.15 Milton may also be, as one recent critic described, calling attention to the monody’s position in the Justa Edouardo King volume: “Lycidas” is the final poem.16 The “once more” indicates he is picking up where Immerito left off with “nomore,” the demarcation of the Calender’s end, as well as where the other elegies have ended. He locates himself in terms of his literary precursors and the immediate moment of the text. To stress his own present moment, Milton reiterates “once more” at the end of line, and adds a gap between the temporal marker “more” and pronoun “Ye.” Milton’s

15 Michael Lieb analyzes “Yet once more” as a Biblical formulary: “‘Yet once more’ recalls not only the classical and Renaissance pastoral elegiac tradition of Theocritus, Moschus, Alamanni, and Marot but also the scriptural tradition founded upon the texts from Haggai and Hebrews. At the same time, Milton associates the phrase with the redemptive mission of Christ, culminating in the Last Judgement and the experience of heavenly bliss by those who are redeemed” (32).
16 Michael Gadaleto has suggested that “Yet once more” alludes to “Lycidas’s” position in the Justa Edouardo King volume: “Rereading them [the opening 5 lines] in the context of the Justa, however, one senses that, from its very first line—‘Yet once more . . . and once more’—Lycidas intentionally highlights its position as the last of the Justa elegies and its awareness of the thirty-five others that have preceded it. Indeed, the opening lines establish an immediate fellowship with the earlier elegies, attempting like them to "pluck [the] Berries" (3) of poetic inspiration in order to memorialize King’s death” (172-173). In Milton’s 1645 Poems, his “first published volume of poetry,” “Lycidas” was placed second to last, before the Ludlow Mask, Revard, p. 1, 162.
enjambment places emphasis on his direct address to the trees, and in doing so, he revives the Calendar’s seasonal framework. Spenser’s Colin describes the trees whose fruit dies in the winter: the season “promised of timely fruite such store / And left both bare and barren now at erst” (“December,” 105-06). Whereas Colin goes on to use a possessive pronoun—“My haruest wast, my hope away dyd wipe”—Milton reiterates the second-person, “ye” and “your” (108, emphasis mine). Colin’s expected success has been destroyed by winter, and Spenser uses passive voice to say so. But Milton actively asserts “I come” (3), even though his entrance does not appear where we might expect it to.

Instead, it appears after the references to Spenser’s Calendar. Milton’s transformation of the “December” passage suggests the emergence in his verse of a distinctive suspension not present in Spenser. Brisman has described the effect of such an opening: “[it] sees subject, poet, reader, and scene under the blight of premature death . . . There is an extraordinary identification of the writing of the poem with the arrest of life” (59). The delay in the lines parallels Milton’s hesitation to make such an interruption and to begin his poetic career. At the same time, the repeated “once more” indicates a repetition: that he has begun before. Spenser’s Colin measures his failure too soon, and Milton learns from this. He makes sure to measure his art from its beginning, but doesn’t stop there.

Milton bursts in to the poem as if he were the winter of Colin’s “December,” and he does so to convey the way his own beginning feels like an end. In Spenser’s “December,” Colin’s fruit ripened too early, and his death approached too soon; Colin

17 For a reading of the poem that explores how Milton transforms the Pindaric ode, see Revard, pp. 162-204. Specifically, she asserts that by calling the poem a “monody,” Milton looks back to the “commemorative ode” as a genre, and this allows him to “include . . . a range of utterances and themes” and to “move digressively over topics that at first appear to have little to do with the lament or song for the dead,” p. 166.
assumes he did not realize the poetic potential he longed for. In “Lycidas,” Milton’s context is Spenserian: the “berries” are immature, ripe, and out of season, yet the speaker is the one who must crush them. The speaker’s “forc’d fingers rude” signify that he is constrained by the circumstance of remembering Edward King, who unexpectedly drowned. This tragedy prompts Milton’s speaker to begin too early, so that he can memorialize a poet whose life was cut short. Because King will never have the chance to look back on his career as a poet, as Colin did, Milton’s speaker is forced to confront the reality of loss at the outset. Blurring his beginning with another poet’s end, Milton’s speaker identifies the temporal rupture he is causing by memorializing King in the first place. To remember King is to acknowledge all that King could not accomplish as poet and as a man, because he died. Referring to Spenser in this way, Milton speaks to the shared experience of all poets: like King and Colin, he will experience death in linear and cyclical time.¹⁸

Milton aligns himself and King to Colin, yet he seeks to not let historical and seasonal time limit him. Instead, Milton brings together history, the seasons, and the apocalypse: he says he will “shatter” the leaves “before the mellowing year” (5). Milton inscribes his own poetic role inside the “mellowing year,” a reference to the divine harvest of souls: the second coming. This description once again conflates Colin’s and Immerito’s perspectives. When Colin’s fruit falls before it develops, Spenser denotes that it is “halfe mellow ripe” (107, emphasis mine). Speaking of the end of his life, Colin says “So now my yeare drawes to his latter terme”: the seasonal year and the metaphorical

¹⁸ Writing of Milton’s identification with King, Brisman writes, “The shock of recognition of the poet’s self-absorption is one way the reader shares the poem’s sense of abortive arrest,” p. 59.
period of his life come to a close. Yet Immerito puts forth that the text will be read “every 
yeare,” a reference to the entirety of historical time that stands between the present and 
the apocalypse.

For Milton, the “mellowing year” signifies both of those ends: his physical death, 
and Jesus’s second coming. Milton seeks to negotiate those ends, because they are 
connected to one another; the apocalypse is when individuals will receive an eternal 
reward for their work on earth, but only work that God approves of. Milton borrows the 
“yet once more” from Hebrews 12.25-28, which illustrates this idea:

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him 
that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him 
that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath 
promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And 
this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, 
as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 
Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, 
whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our 
God is a consuming fire.19

In this passage, Jesus is the one who “shook” and will come “once more” to “shake,” and 
when he returns, the works “of things that are made” will be tested for their worth. This 
verse demonstrates Jesus’s temporal actions can provide a reference point for the 
Christian’s life. In history, he or she can anticipate an eternal kingdom, where one 
receives reward for his works on earth. This reference helps us to see that, as the writer of

19 Rikkers and Scofield, The Scofield Study Bible III, KJV.
Hebrews recommends, the speaker is measuring his life by looking to *kairos*, moments of significance, Christ’s death and return. As Michael Gadaleto puts it, “A better statement of Milton's reformational intentions and prophetic tone in *Lycidas* would be difficult to find. With its apocalyptic overtones, the biblical passage above speaks of a cleansing and sweeping away of evil and superfluous dross, until only that which is unshaken and true remains” (172-73). From Spenser, Milton has learned to take a more distanced temporal view; from the Bible, he incorporates these temporal structures, because they are necessary for the Christian to understand his life’s significance. Recently analyzing the Biblical context in these opening lines, Netzley remarks that “yet once more . . . means the possibility of an apocalyptically transformed present” (130). To make sense of one’s purpose in time, one must locate oneself in history and consider his actions in light of eternity. To not “waste” his poetic efforts, Milton has no time to waste, so he begins.

Milton’s opening sentence illustrates the point of view that Immerito has prescribed, a distanced temporal vision, and a reverence for his literary influences, and Milton will continue to follow these guidelines in the next key moments of his poem: the invocation to the unknown muse (19-24), the intrusion of Orpheus’s death (50-63), and the interruption of Apollo (76-84). Each moment will exemplify Milton’s fear of following a poet’s example too closely. Specifically, Milton fears Orpheus’s failure of perspective, Orpheus’s unclaimed body after his death, and Colin’s seasonally limited point of view.

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20 Gadaleto compares Milton’s use of Biblical contexts in “*Lycidas*” to his use of the Bible in the epic mode: “As in *Paradise Lost* (1667), many of the learned references in *Lycidas* seem intended to prompt the reader to engage not only with the quoted text but with its context, so as to expand on and complicate an allusion's meaning,” p. 173.
In the invocation to the “gentle” muse, Milton seeks to show he holds a right perspective on his human limitations, because without that view, he may repeat Orpheus’s failure to bring Eurydice back from the dead.\textsuperscript{21} Just as Colin’s incorrect assessment can be attributed to his point of view, two versions of the Orpheus story suggest that Orpheus’s faulty perspective causes his mistake. If Colin underestimates his life’s work by looking to nature, Orpheus overvalues his love for Eurydice by looking at her and overestimating his power: he fails to heed the divine command because he leans too much on himself. Milton was familiar with both Virgil’s and Ovid’s versions of the myth, which are notably different from one another.\textsuperscript{22} In Virgil’s \textit{Georgics}, Orpheus and Eurydice hope to wed, but her death cuts short their plans. To bring her home from the underworld, Orpheus descends there and petitions the king so that she might return. As Orpheus sings, the power of his voice stills the shades and arrests the attention of his divine audience. His request is granted: Eurydice may go back with him, on one condition. He must not turn back to see her until they are on earth again. But on the return journey, a longing to see Eurydice seizes Orpheus, and he turns to look behind him:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Restitit, Eurydicenque suam iam luce sub ipsa}

\textit{Immemor heu! Uictusque animi respexit . . .(490-491)}\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21} For Milton’s use of the Orpheus myth, see Mayerson, Kerrigan, and Falconer. Commenting briefly on the importance of Orpheus to Milton, Kerrigan writes of Milton’s "lifelong fascination with the legend of Orpheus” and his “fascination with the fate of Orpheus,” pp. 179 and 54. Milton will go on to describe his own fears of meeting Orpheus’s fate in \textit{Paradise Lost} 7.32-39.

\textsuperscript{22} Christina Fawcett informs us, “From his time at St. Paul's School, Milton had been intimately acquainted with the writings of Virgil and Ovid, often imitating their style or narratorial voices in his creation of such poems as ‘On the Death of the Beadle of the University of Cambridge’ and his later work ‘Lycidas,’” p. 107.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Georgicon}, edited by J. B. Greenough.
He stopped, turned, looked upon Eurydice
His own once more. But even with the look,
Poured out was all his labour, broken the bond
Of that fell tyrant, and a crash was heard

Three times like the thunder in the meres of hell. (487-491)

Virgil describes the fateful act with the words “Victusque animi respexit,” or “conquered of spirit, he looked back” (my translation). Orpheus’s longing overpowers him: he is not at all aware of Eurydice’s perspective. He doesn’t take into account that if he looks, Eurydice will be lost to him, and she will also live without him in eternity. Orpheus doesn’t think about her experience at all, only what he longs for: he turns to look behind him and sees Eurydice again. As he glances back, he does have her once more, but only for a moment. The Latin words “Eurydicenque suam” translate to “Eurydice his own,” because “suam” is a possessive pronoun. When Orpheus looks back at Eurydice, he turns, possesses her, and loses her at the same time: his move destroys his chance to be with her. Describing Orpheus’s attitude, Pugh points out that Virgil’s word choice communicates Orpheus’s wrong thinking: “The episode reemphasizes the Eclogues’s anti-erotic treatment of love as a form of madness (furor and dementia are the words used at Georgics 4.495 and 488 . . .)” (5). Pugh goes on to note that Eurydice uses the word “furor” to ask Orpheus why he fails to think of her: “quīs et me miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu, quīs tantus furor? (‘What madness so great, Orpheus, has destroyed both miserable me and yourself?’ Georgics 4.494–95)” (qtd. in Pugh, 9). Eurydice points out that by failing to consider her perspective, his thinking was outside the bounds of reason.
When Ovid refashions this story, he slightly modifies the motive for Orpheus’s turn. Self-interest, not love as madness, drives Orpheus to see Eurydice:

Nec procul afuerunt telluris margine summae:

Hic, ne deficeret, metuens avidusque videndi

Flexit amans oculos; et protinus illa relapse est

Bracchiaque intendens prendique et prendere certans

Nil nisi cedentes infelix arripit auras. (X.55-59)\(^{24}\)

And now they neared the edge of the bright world,
And, fearing lest she fain, longing to look,
He turned his eyes—and straight she slipped away.
He stretched his arms to hold her—to be held—
And clasped, poor soul, naught but the yielding air. (X.55-59)

Whereas Ovid’s retelling implies that there is no brief moment of possession, in Virgil, Orpheus’s limited power can last for a moment—but only that—since he overvalues his own feelings for her. Virgil’s Orpheus does, for a time, have power to see and know her again. Ovid’s Orpheus loses Eurydice because he reaches out to hold her for himself.\(^{25}\)

While Virgil suggests Orpheus holds some power, he implies that he doesn’t consider Eurydice’s point of view as much as he ought to have—or as much as he considered his zealous love for her. Still, both Virgil and Ovid communicate the poet’s limited point of view.

\(^{24}\) Metamorphoses, edited by Hugo Magnus.

\(^{25}\) Fawcett describes Ovid’s Orpheus in the following way: “Ovid's Orpheus is not a symbol of immortal love or undying grief, but rather a conceited . . . artist with a misplaced sense of personal charm and physical invulnerability,” p. 108.
When Milton revises Orpheus’s turn in “Lycidas,” Milton seeks to avoid the Virgilian turn, and the Ovidian self-interested act, that both end in the loss of the other. After Milton invokes the “sisters of the sacred well,” he stops to imagine a future muse, who is not there yet, but might be one day (15):

| Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse; |
| So may some gentle muse |
| With lucky words favor my destined urn, |
| And as he passes turn, |
| And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud. (18-22) |

Suspension once again slows our forward movement in this passage, which interrupts an monody about a poet who has died. The prepositional phrase “with lucky words” separates the subject “muse” from the verb “favor,” and the conditional word “may” draws us out of historical time into the realm of what might be. The speaker retrospectively turns to look back on a figure who has died, looks ahead to foresee his own death, and re-experiences the loss as he looks back. This shift to the conditional “may” marks the speaker’s position as he turns between the past, present, and future. He recalls Colin, Immerito, and Orpheus: like Colin, Milton positions himself in present time (he is mortal), but unlike Colin, he distances himself to imagine the future, when another poet will remember him, just as Immerito has predicted how future readers will respond to the Calender. Whereas lines 18, 20, and 22 have ten syllables, lines 19 and 21 have only six. In this way, “So may some gentle muse” and “And as he passes turn” appear incomplete, and they are, for the blank space marks the lines not yet written. As Milton’s

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26. “What separates this poet from the dead one will separate the next from the present one . . . the distance is no less than life itself,” Brisman, p. 221.
speaker reserves space for the future poet, he reminds himself that he is limited by historical time because one day, he (like King and the future muse) will die. He can only hope that another poet will be there to remember him. But he is not certain: the “may” communicates his hope as only that, a memorialization for which he can’t be certain.

Milton’s speaker is not only limited by his lifespan but also his subjectivity. He negotiates between his present moment in history, and his notion of a future in which he is worthy of being remembered. He wonders how to confront those temporalities, considering his mortality. The speaker looks back on King, just as Orpheus glimpsed Eurydice. Like her, the speaker visualizes a poet who looks back on him, because the present speaker hopes to be remembered for his art. But Orpheus’s turn destroyed his chance to be with Eurydice. His momentary glance failed to take into account the reality of what would happen, his total loss of her, and no song could bring her back again.

Milton’s speaker turns to see King, and although he imagines a future muse, what he sees is only a fiction: Miller says, “the lines poise two possibilities: the Muse ‘may . . . turn’ and the words may be ‘lucky’” (146, my emphasis). We are in the realm of what-might-be, in which the speaker recognizes his mortality and his subjectivity, without an ability to resolve the two. In these lines, we hear of the urn and the body (“shroud”), as Victoria Silver notices.27 Miller remarks on the significance of using both terms: “Such equivocations register a failure of the imagination faced with death . . . They are at odds with the sense of control conveyed by the balanced antithesis of ‘lucky words’ and ‘destined urn.’ The urn will not be evaded, but the words of the passing Muse still belong

27 Silver, p. 794.
to life” (146). He continues, “Luck, however, implies chance, or what may seem like chance because it lies beyond the speaker’s control, like the gift of inspiration . . . Luck escapes destiny, as the words of ‘Lycidas’ have found a life beyond Milton’s death—but is this a purely secular survival, belonging wholly to the human imagination and its works, or does it receive some radically altered sense in the grammar of faith?” (146). These reflections stress that as the speaker pictures what might be, he leaves open how history and subjectivity can incorporate a temporal vision beyond those constructs. Here, the poet expresses an idea he seeks to resolve in this monody: if his life is finite, and his viewpoint (and verse) is limited, what is the value of his work and his role as a poet? Picturing the future muse allows him to consider that his verse may be praised in time, yet in this passage, the poet lacks the larger vision of temporality that will help him to resolve these questions.

Because the speaker might not be remembered or celebrated after he dies, his address to the nymphs and the subsequent interruption reflect this fear (58-63). There was no one to witness Lycidas’s death:

Where were ye nymphs when the remorseless deep
Clos’d o’re the head of your lov’d Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old Bards, the famous Druids ly,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wisard stream:
Ay me, I fondly dream!

Had ye been there—for what could that have done? (50-56, emphasis added)

In lines 50-51, the speaker accuses the nymphs for their absence. Then, the poet undercuts those lines with suspension that includes negation, a colon, a dash, and conditional phrasing. The negations stress the fact that no one was there to prevent the poet’s death. After line 55, “Nor yet where Deva spread his wizard stream,” a colon leads us to expect a thought that would complete the sentence, such as a description of where the nymphs were. Instead, the poet disrupts our expectations: the nymphs, the bards, and the druids that could have been on the shaggy-topped hills of Mona are all a fiction, melted into air. In the next line, the poet uses a conditional to ask, “Had ye bin there—for what could that have done,” to suggest that once death has occurred in history, there is no going back to reverse it. As in line 19, “So may some gentle muse,” the speaker once again uses a hypothetical to interrupt the dream. No one is able to find the body of Lycidas or bury him; the speaker can only long for and imagine such a recovery, and such a vision is only that. Here, imagining death from the pastoral world’s perspective seems to be futile, for it, like the seasons, is a faulty construct. It cannot reverse history, or explain why, or offer consolation, at least from this speaker’s perspective.

Glimpsed only from a limited reference point, a poet’s life and death has no point, and Milton continues to shatter the “dream” with Orpheus’s death. Although the cosmos mourns the loss of Orpheus, he earns no glory:

What could the Muse her self that Orpheus bore,

The muse her self, for her enchanting son

Whom universal nature did lament,

When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His goary visage *down* the stream was sent,

*Down* the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore. (58-63, emphasis mine)

Similar to the passage before it, this one includes conditional language and repetition. The poet begins to ask a question that he doesn’t quite finish—“What could the Muse herself . . .”—“have done,” we might add silently. The repetition of “could” recalls the poet’s earlier question, “for what could that have done?” By using the conditional, he sets up a comparison between the himself and the Muse. He could no more have brought back Lycidas than she could have prevented Orpheus’s death. The repeated conditional delays our forward movement to dramatize that the death of Orpheus, like the death of Lycidas, has achieved nothing. Likewise, the reiteration of “down . . . down” across lines 62 and 63 slows us down, only to show us that the stream can only move forward, just as historical time only moves ahead, not behind. The water drifts on as if it were a ship in a Breughel *Landscape*: no one appears to recover his body, or to honor it with a burial.

Milton diverges from Virgil in this depiction of weak, silent Orpheus; in Virgil’s *Georgics*, Orpheus is able to call out Eurydice’s name as his head floats down the river, but the voice, like the nymphs, is missing from “Lycidas.” The narrator’s interruptions show death’s futility, and art’s futility, even, if one cannot bring the seasons, history, and eternity together.  

29 Silver remarks, “But what that premature and unnecessary death discloses is the pastoral’s haplessness as explanation in the failed and guilty muse, the uncertain nymphs, the incapacity of poetry and Phoebus to do anything more effectual than offer platitudes of heavenly reward, an inconsequential cast of gods and demi-gods who know nothing of the event, and the allegorical obscurity and inarticulateness of Camus. The speaker suffers from this incongruity, but persists in the condition that fosters it, which is the belief that he can reconcile the pastoral’s conventions of meaning with the fact of Lycidas's death,” p. 793.
In these references to Lycidas and Orpheus, Milton has used formal delays to suggest the futility of using history to define one’s career. But when Apollo interrupts the speaker, he offers an eternal perspective. While the narrator describes fame as something that he must achieve in his lifespan (linear time), in the middle of line 76, Phoebus interrupts the description of a life cut short:

But the fair Guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th’ abhorred shears,
And slits the thin spun life. But not the praise,
Phœbus repli’d, and touch’d my trembling ears;
Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil Set off to th’ world,
Nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreds aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfet witnes of all judging Jove . . . (73-82, emphasis added)

The poet expresses his hope, only to find his death occurs too soon: “But the fair guerdon when we hope to find, / And think to burst out into sudden blaze / Comes the blind fury . . .” (73-74). The imagery describing the reward evokes a “fair” recompense and a bright fire. Here, the poet may be echoing Colin’s limited point of view. Where Colin expected to find a bright bud of corn, he instead finds his hopes burned to a crisp, as if they were struck by lightning:

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30 For Revard, this interruption reflects “Pindar’s sententiae—the often-praised aphorisms that Pindar so frequently employs to assert the moral and divine purpose of his odes,” p. 175.
Thus is my sommer wore away and wasted,

Thus is my harvest hastened all to rathe:

The eare that budded faire, is burnt and blasted,

And all my hoped gaine is turnd to scathe. (“December” 97-100)

Colin’s “eare,” a symbol for the reward of his art, has been destroyed. When Phoebus interrupts, his first action is to touch the speaker’s ears; Apollo’s voice has rendered him thunderstruck, and perhaps he touches them to represent a recovery of his (and Colin’s) lost reward for his art.

In line 76, Phoebus interjects with a negation where the poet ends the sentence mid-line, thereby supplanting the speaker’s linear outlook with an eternal one. The narrator’s point of view is historical—Fury “slits the thin spun life”—but Phoebus leads the poet to imagine “no plant that grows on mortal soil” (82). It’s not the plant that matters, but where you look for it, Apollo implies. If fame is “no plant,” and “nor in the glistening foil,” how can one tell what its absence signifies—if there’s no plant to see, can one have truly made the art that God rewards? Apollo suggests that in seasonal terms, there would be nothing to see. Apollo’s interruption is a reply to the speaker’s question: why should he “tend” his “shepherds trade” with “unceissant care” (64-65, my emphasis). In his response, Apollo sounds as if he could also be answering Spenser’s Colin, who mourns, “And thus of all my harvest hope I have / Nought reaped but a weedye crop of care” (“December” 121-22, my emphasis). To Colin, Apollo would say “no . . . but,”

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31 The editors note that the “glistening foil” refers to a “thin leaf of gold or silver placed under a precious stone to enhance its brilliancy,” p. 104. According to the OED, an older definition of the word “foil” can also refer to the “leaf” of a plant; it may also refer to a “leaf” of “paper.” See definitions 1a and 2b. These definitions might look back to Colin’s hoped-for harvest, and they could point to the connection between the seasonal harvest and rewards for one’s poetic efforts.
repurposing the negation to argue where true fame abides, since it is not found in a seasonal, earthly harvest of poetic renown. To the speaker (and to Colin), Apollo asserts that fame is not a part of seasonal framework; one cannot measure one’s success or failure by a seasonal harvest. Instead, one must look to “heaven,” where fame “lives and spreds aloft by those pure eyes” (81). Living and spreading is what a plant might do, so once again, Apollo speaks in seasonal registers. Poetic glory can multiply like an earthly vine, but only in an eternal context and after the final judgment: Jove is the one who “pronounces lastly,” judging every act, as in Hebrews 12.27. Clipping the speaker’s fears (and the literal line), Apollo connects one’s linear lifespan to the apocalypse, so that the speaker might step back to recognize the relationship between the two.

In the previous example, the apocalypse and eternity interrupt the speaker’s limited, temporal point of view, and this pattern occurs again when the “Pilot” interrupts the speaker’s “now” to refer to the apocalypse (88, 107-31). After Apollo interjects, the speaker returns to the present, “But now my oate proceeds,” in which he describes how Neptune’s herald petitions the water and air to explain Lycidas’s death. As when he addresses the nymphs, the speaker returns to negation: they knew “not of his story” and Hippotades adds that “not a blast” was to blame (95, 97). Leaving the references to classical pastoral, the narrator uses suspension to connect the apocalypse, the end point of history, to historical temporality. St. Peter asks, “How well could I have spar'd for thee young swain, / Anow of such as for their bellies sake, / Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold?” (113-115). Because Peter goes on to describe who he “could” have exchanged in the place of Lycidas, we are asked to compare his abilities with those of the speaker and the Muse, neither of whom could have done anything to rescue Lycidas or Orpheus.
Although he might have been able, Peter did not do anything to prevent Lycidas from dying. This passage has been much discussed as the narrator’s critique of the Anglican clergy, and it also in more simple terms furthers an idea we have already seen: that even Peter himself did not rescue Lycidas—just as the speaker, nymphs, and muse could not help him.32 Near the close of Peter’s words, we encounter a reference to the apocalypse, which tells us that final end will destroy the false shepherds, as well as the “grim woolf” who “daily devours apace”: “But that two-handed engine at the door, / Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more” (129-132).33 Although even Peter himself could not keep Lycidas alive, and far worse teachers continue to remain in the church, their power will come to a close once the divine judgment occurs. Milton’s repetition of the word “smite” delays our forward movement in the lines, even as it resonates typologically; it is the most apocalyptic moment in the poem. “Smite,” a word frequently used to depict God’s punishment on the Egyptians and on Israel in the Old Testament, is also used in the description of the end times in Revelation 11.5-7.34 This passage sheds light on Milton’s first use of “smite.” We read, “These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite

32 In Milton’s 1645 Poems, he would add the headnote that it “foretold ‘the ruin of the corrupted Clergy then [in 1637] in their height.’” See Revard, p. 162, and Silver, p. 798-799. Insofar as the narrator hopes to enlighten his readers about the clergy’s false teaching, he is like Spenser’s Immerito, who anticipates that his poem will teach readers “from the falsers fraud his folded flocke to keepe,” “Envoy,” line 6.
33 For a recent close reading of these two lines, see James Kelley and Catherine Bray, who explain that the words “two handed engine” refer to the printing press. “The ‘two-handed engine’ is a weapon of shock and awe, poised to close the angle of the Apocalypse and bring end time forward through the global publication of the Word,” p. 133.
34 See, for example, Exodus 3:20, “And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.” p. 25, (emphasis mine).
the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.” The verse looks ahead to the end times, when Christians will possess limited power before the beast destroys them. Such a verse directly connects to St. Peter’s allusion to the apocalypse, the moment when the false ministers will reap the consequences of their actions; in Revelation 11, the opposite is happening, because the Christians can manipulate the waters and “smite” the earth. Although we learn they are killed shortly thereafter, another use of “smite” projects Christ’s victory. The verse speaks of Christ, who sits on the white horse and whose name is the “WORD OF GOD” (Revelation 19.11-15). We read, “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (19.15). The “word of God” is the one who will cast the beast into the lake of fire. In this way, the second “smite” prefigures the destruction of evil for all of time.

Because he uses repetition to delay our movement, as well as Biblical echoes in lines 129-32, this is Milton’s most evident moment of stepping back to consider a larger temporal category in the poem, and in it we can see traces of the kind of move Immerito suggested future poets ought to make. James Kelly and Catherine Bray, who analyze the significance of Milton’s “two-handed engine,” suggest how we might connect Milton to Spenser here. Kelley and Bray include an illustration from Jan van der Noodt’s A Theatre for Worldlings (1569), in which Spenser’s early poems before the Calender were printed. They inform us that in the Theatre for Worldlings, a depiction of the apocalypse appears: “the woodcut and the apocalyptic sonnet that accompanies it are based on the representation of the Word of God in Rev. 19.15: ‘And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations’” (132). The image dramatizes Christ’s
power as the “Word of God,” because the sword that proceeds out of Christ’s mouth extends straight towards his enemies, foreshadowing their defeat. At the same time, the image suspends the events of the apocalypse just as Milton has done in these lines. Whether Milton was familiar with it or not, it demonstrates the significance of such an idea in his day.

Near the poem’s close, Milton’s suspensions once again negotiate between seasonal and historical time (132-164). The narrator summons the natural world with an orphic power when he says the dread voice is “past” (133). Once again, Milton plays with temporal registers, because St. Peter’s voice looks ahead to future. By saying that St. Peter’s voice is in the “past,” the narrator imagines he possesses some control over time. He invokes the Sicilian muse to “call the Vales, and bid them hither cast / Their bels, and flourets of a thousand hues” (134-35). Like Orpheus, who held power over the natural world, the narrator strives to bring the natural world in line with the historical event. In short, he tries to rewrite what nature could not do for Orpheus. Whereas the stream, like historical time, could only carry Orpheus’s head forward, the narrator thinks he might move the streams and flowers to mourn for Lycidas. But the cyclical features in nature are called to ornament the hearse of a body that is not there. The “Herse where Lycid lies,” is, after all, only the product of the narrator’s imagination. The narrator once again turns to a cyclical temporality, but such a construct reminds us that we mourn for a body that is absent, and without a body, no burial can take place. Whereas the nymphs and nature did not intervene to pull Orpheus from the water, or to give him a proper burial, the narrator rewrites that moment here. But the flowers in season cannot offer consolation to an absent body. In imagining that he could effect a cosmic turn towards
Lycidas, the narrator is placing himself in the position of Orpheus, seeking to provide the turn towards Eurydice that acknowledges her fully. In Milton’s cosmic turn to recover Lycidas, he reimagines the moment when Virgil’s Orpheus attains his love once more, if only briefly, before he loses her. Yet even so, the narrator acknowledges such a turn to be not a real kind of consolation. Milton interrupts his own vision here because the delay is a fiction: “For so to interpose a little ease, / Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise” (152-53). Here, he interrupts his imagined funeral for Lycidas’s absent body, in order to stress that he has created it. For this reason, ornamenting the hearse is once again something limited by his own point of view, and this realization will lead him to look for consolation in the idea of eternity.

Although the narrator recognizes that his consolation is only a fiction, he imagines how eternity can subsume a loss in historical time. In the vision of heaven, Milton uses the words “for ever” to slip between eternity and history:

There entertain him all the saints above,

In solemn troops, and sweet societies

That sing, and singing in their glory move,

And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes. (172-181)

Milton’s description here not quite suspension, because the lines continue forward without negations or conditionals as they portray the relational and musical harmony in heaven. The hosts of heaven enact a final turn towards Lycidas, a turn that can never be undone. Moving towards him to wipe his eyes, they fully see his grief and reverse it. This moment depicts perfect synchronicity: the words “for ever” hover between history and eternity. “And wipe the tears forever” could mean the song removes all of Lycidas’s
sorrow in an instant, so he will never feel pain again, or the placement of “for ever”
might signal an everlasting movement, in which the song creates consolation that has no
end. Even further, “for ever” portrays eternity as the end point of every “once more.”
“For ever” represents an evermore that cancels out the linear markers of “yet once more”
and “no more.” I would suggest that this an early example of Milton’s synchronicity,

since the speaker is bringing together Lycidas, as a figure in historical time, and the
saints, who dwell in eternity. But this kind of synchronicity is not exactly what we will
encounter in Paradise Lost. Here, the remnants of suspension in the lines remain, I think,
because the speaker of this poem resides in historical time, as one who will die; he cannot
fully move past the delays of chronological time, so commas and enjambments cause us
to linger in the lines. The vision has brought him consolation. At the same time, he
returns to the present from the eternity he has imagined, and he struggles to separate
Lycidas from history: “Now Lycidas the Shepherds weep no more; / Hence forth thou art
the Genius of the shore / In thy large recompense . . .” (182-184). Once again, the
narrator is in the realm of linear time, where he creates a fictional role for Lycidas, who
stands “hence forth,” or “from this point forward.” Because of his position in historical
time, the narrator must find consolation for the loss in the present.

Milton’s last move is to break from the poem, and in doing so, he shifts from one
temporality to another, as Spenser did. After reading of Lycidas’s imagined role, the poet
steps from behind the frame: “Thus sang the uncouth swain to th’ oaks and rills, / While
the still Morn went out with sandals gray . . .” (186-87). If the poet seeks to distance
himself from his art, he certainly succeeds, but this is a different kind of distancing than
what occurs in the first sentence. The speaker starts too early from fear that he won’t
finish before the final judgment, but the “swain” directs our course, shifting us back and forth in time. The poem’s beginning exaggerated the speaker’s present moment to suggest his position in relation to literary and Biblical history, and the apocalypse; he needed to begin his poem to make the most of his time until his death and Jesus’s return, so he asserts control over temporal constructs. Like the narrator of the poem, the “swain” exercises a power in diurnal and historical time, but the power is much more understated. This is the final interruption of the poem, yet it foreshadows another beginning and end, the “still Morn” and the sunset. At the beginning of this passage, we are asked to go back in time, when the poet first began to sing with “eager thought,” and by the time we reach the end, the song has concluded: “And now the Sun had stretch’d out all the hills, / And now was dropt into the Western bay” (188-189). He moves us backwards, first to the morning when he composed the poem, and then to the “now” of his present. The ending gives us pause because we’ve been asked to move backwards so quickly to imagine that everything we’ve heard has been composed, that the song is a completed event, already located in the past. Then, the swain invites us to catch up with him in time. The repetition of “now” slows the speed down to the pace of the descending sun. The sun sets just as we would expect it would, and that is what makes this disruption the best fiction of all. We watch the last light cascade across the landscape, before it falls beyond the horizon—we watch it with him, as if it is happening before our very eyes. His subjective experience of the sun’s descent has become our own pause. This suspension of light connects us to the swain, to diurnal time, and it locates us in the present, and by the end of the poem, the text is a completed act of history.
The shift in point of view at the end—from speaker to swain—prompts us to remember that if we have observed Milton’s invocation of Spenser at the outset, perhaps we might find traces of Spenser’s Colin or Immerito here, too. Immerito anticipated his text’s success by looking to the cosmos—to the stars, high above him; Milton closes the poem after asking us to watch the star set with him in real time. Perhaps this is a literal rendering of Milton’s adoration: his “original” has urged his readers to reverence the “high-steppes” of previous poets. What is missing from the poem’s close is any reference to the world’s dissolution. The setting sun is the closest we come to the apocalypse, or the end of time, yet its descent does not feel final. Immerito exits with “nomore”; the swain stops his song, awaiting pastures “new.” While Immerito has said the text is one for “every year,” Milton doesn’t say outright how long his poem will last, or how we can best follow his example. He simply beckons us to wait for the morning, the dawn of his next song.

These closing lines assert the swain’s power to step back in time and rewrite the loss that he has experienced in one final way. We might compare the swain’s invitation to watch the descending sun with him to an earlier moment in the poem, when he remembers a day he spent with Lycidas:

Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eye-lids of the morn,
We drove a field, and both together heard
What time the grayfly winds her sultry horn,
Batt’ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose, at evening, bright
Toward heav’n’s descent had sloped his westering wheel. (25-31)

These lines depict the same diurnal framework that we see in the poem’s end, the sun’s rise and its fall, and they also suggest continual, historical time, since they “oft” were together until the close of day. But that was when Lycidas was there, and he is no more. In his absence, the swain compels us to join him, to take Lycidas’s place. Closing the poem with the sun’s slow fall reminds us of the movement of chronological time that we cannot stop, but only experience—that we cannot reverse, unless, that is, in poetry.

Spenser’s juxtaposition of December and the epilogue prompts readers to consider a poet’s achievements in terms of specific categories of time. Even though a poet can’t ever quite know the influence his work may have on future generations, he must stop for a moment to picture its magnitude. While Spenser invites readers to make meaning of these temporal categories across separate features, in “Lycidas,” Milton takes up Spenser’s invitation not to let seasonal time limit him but to see his work from afar. Milton doesn’t turn from the seasonal altogether; instead, he complicates the relationships between cyclical and historical, and historical and eternal constructs. In this way, Milton seeks to understand the kind of limited power a poet has both within and over time. Spenser’s Calendar maker conditionally anticipates his verse will endure; Milton’s narrator can only hope that it might, so he envisions how it would.
CHAPTER 2
STANDING IN CHAOS, STOPPING IN EDEN:
SATANIC SUSPENSIONS AND HUMANS’ HAPPY STATE IN
PARADISE LOST 1-7

Milton approaches form and time in “Lycidas” as a reader versed in Spenser’s *Calender*. Following Spenser’s stylistic and temporal moves, Milton implies that he aspires to be a poet in the line of Spenser: one who begins with pastoral and continues to epic. But Milton’s step in that direction was not a quick one. He did not identify himself as the author of “Lycidas” (it had been published under the initials “J.M.”), and while the monody’s final lines compel us to look forward to Milton’s next work, he was not yet known for his poetry (Evans 47). Helgerson writes, “An extraordinary delay marks Milton’s progress as a poet. Though he promised to undertake a major literary career as early as 1628, he did not finally set to work on the poem that was to fulfill his promise until 1658, thirty years later . . . [when] he was fifty and [he] did not publish it until he was almost fifty-nine” (243). Eric Song has recently observed, “The existence of the poem bears witness to the poet’s victory of his belatedness” (153). 35

35 To describe Milton’s “delay” in completing the epic, Eric Song points to the opening of book 9 and book 7: “Yet Milton also describes the delay he has endured in his own poetic biography: ‘Since first this subject for heroic song / Pleased me long choosing, and beginning late’ (23-26). It is difficult not to feel, despite the literal meaning, that some of the heroism belonging to the poem is meant to accrue to the poet. Milton has already described himself as writing in the midst of ‘evil days,’ ‘with dangers compassed round’ (7.25-27),” p. 153.
between the publication of “Lycidas” (1637) and *Paradise Lost* (1667), yet in his early poem, we can see many of Milton’s formal patterns that would become more fully realized in his epic. In “Lycidas,” patterns of suspension and synchronicity signal the speaker’s longing to make sense of temporal categories in conflict with one another. Its placement as the final poem in the *Justa* volume constrains Milton to the immediate context of Edward King’s death, and his own mortality as a poet.

Once Milton appropriates these patterns in *Paradise Lost*, he creates the possibility for readers to understand multiple points of view because the context shifts to a much more expansive landscape, that of the Biblical fall. In his epic, we more clearly understand the kinds of interruptions that were so jarring to *Lycidas*’s structure (and its speaker). By weaving these formal patterns throughout the epic, Milton narrows the gap between the reader and the character, so that we can identify with the point of view of falling (and fallen) Adam and Eve. I trace specific patterns of suspension operating in the epic and how they depict a character’s historical consciousness, which Grossman defines as the “relation of the self to time” (6). According to Grossman, the narrative is what delineates how Adam and Eve move through the process of deciding and choosing in a way that anticipates the post-lapsarian Christian’s temporal experience (10). While Jessica Wolfe has recently explored Milton’s suspensions in terms of their Homeric roots, she primarily does so to describe Homer’s influence on Milton. Drawing upon Wolfe’s definitions of formal suspension and expanding them, I argue for how and to what extent Milton uses the device to portray a character’s subjectivity and his or her perception—and misperception—of their role in time (Grossman 149, fn14). These patterns encourage
us to question how a subject’s point of view on his temporal position—his or her historical consciousness—aligns with or is at odds with providential truth. Moments of formal suspension show how the poet underlines the process of making sense of one’s place in time, as well as bringing together temporal categories—including eternal, subjective, historical, and providential time. If Milton uses moments of suspension to elucidate Satanic plot, and mankind’s unawareness of his role in time, Milton uses moments of contrasting synchronicity to relay the unwavering harmony between God and nature in an unfallen landscape, and the human experience of providential time after the fall, which grace makes possible. In these ways, the poet encourages readers to ask how individual moments of choice fit into a linear timeline in which the fall is the beginning of human history and its end is the apocalypse. These patterns mark Satan’s intentions, Adam’s questions about obedience, the narrator’s expectations, and Eve’s pre-lapsarian hopes and fears.

**Temporal Positions and Formal Suspension**

God’s providential plan is for Adam and Eve to make sense of their roles in time, and they discern and exercise volition correctly when they align their actions with His divine perspective on history and eternity. According to Grossman’s *Authors to Themselves*, this is the underlying lesson readers construct from *Paradise Lost*. Adam and Eve “must first imagine that the events they experience seriatim form a discernible and meaningful pattern, and then make such choices as will conform that pattern to their understanding of the revealed patterns of providence. They must author a life history conformable to that which God desires” (8). He continues, “To judge and choose well, it
is necessary to match the story one is writing to a revelation of providence’s story of all things.” For Grossman, humans can only come to a full understanding of their actions if they know what the consequences will be; yet, paradoxically, they can only know the results of their actions after their death and the apocalypse (9). Before the fall, Adam and Eve cannot know the value of one isolated episode to linear time, but following it, events can be understood more comprehensively: “The historical episode is understood only when placed in the prospect of the completed narrative of history itself. Only the long or retrospective view discloses the motives and intentions, the interior ‘truths,’ that determine the quality of the sequence of actions” (Grossman 9). Individuals must therefore work out, or imagine, how their actions in the present might be relevant in a history providence defines, where Christ’s appearance, death, and resurrection bring together “life history” and “world history” (9-12). Individuals can make sense of what they discern and do by looking backwards to their actions and forwards to Christ’s second coming, and the rewards they will receive in eternity.36 During their lives on earth, individuals must learn to consider providence as directing their steps. While formal elements are not central to Grossman’s argument, in this chapter, I will show how formal choices delineate not just Adam and Eve’s story, but Satan’s, the narrator’s, and ours.

Critics have explored how Milton’s use of formal patterns furthers Milton’s characterization of God. Jessica Wolfe recently notices how formal choices distinguish God’s eternal perspective from the human experience of time, in which God bestows this ability to look backwards and forwards (357). Although Wolfe’s underlying purpose is to

36 “An individual conceiving of himself in this way, evaluates his actions not only in relation to an immediate situation but also in relation to his image of himself as a particular sort of person, author of a particular sort of life story, and actor in the broader world history of which his personal story plays a part,” Grossman, p. 6.
assert to what import Milton employs Homeric verbal devices, she takes a formal approach that is useful for defining some of the characteristics of suspension and synchronicity in the epic. For example, Wolfe asserts that “Paradise Lost consistently represents God as speaking the present tense . . . in order to highlight the discrepancy between divine pan-temporality and the limited, sequential temporality of human narrative” (357). She explains,

[God’s present tense] convey[s] the ‘[i]mmediate’ nature of divine knowledge and divine action, ‘more swift / Than time or motion,’ [and] also forestalls the Satanic objection that divine foreknowledge compromises spiritual liberty: if God is omnipresent, the distinction between foreknowledge and retrospection exists only as an accommodation to the temporal constraints of the human mind. (357)

According to Wolfe, Milton’s verb tense reflects God’s perspective on time, and the human inability to see from His vantage point. God grants prolepsis and analepsis so that individuals can make sense of their actions from his point of view. The process of anticipating and looking back offers individuals the opportunity to connect actions to effects: “Howsoever much this limitation [the temporal constraints of the human mind] might hinder the mortal ability to comprehend God as temporally ‘all in all,’” it is a limitation essential to Milton’s theology, since without an understanding of temporal sequence (post hoc) it is impossible to conceive of causal sequence (propter hoc) and thus to admit responsibility for choices and actions” (357).37 Wolfe’s readings of Paradise Lost clarify how these formal choices illuminate God’s all-knowing but non-

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37 She continues, “In other words, thinking in temporal terms, for mortals, is a necessary precondition for pondering the consequences of moral decisions: like God’s scales, the mortal conception of time makes manifest the ‘sequel’ of causes by showing what may happen after—and, more importantly, because of—something else” (357).
predetermining perspective. Scenes of “deliberation” foreshadow the future God is already aware of: “Milton, like Homer, is always ‘sowing the seeds of future events’ in order to keep his audience in a state of expectation. Yet in Paradise Lost, God knows exactly which way victory will go . . .” (313). In contrast to Wolfe, who sees God as not determining the future, Brian Cummings uses a formalist approach to argue that Milton’s God seems to “will the future into happening” (429). Cummings informs us that during the Renaissance, modal auxiliaries “shall” and “will”—both of which God uses—could function as “epistemic” and “deontic.” “Epistemic” statements foretell the future, and “deontic” relate God’s “desires, intentions, instructions” (429).

Specifically, patterns of suspension and synchronicity show how Milton’s formal patterns open up characters’ subjectivity to us, and I incorporate several of Wolfe’s definitions into my own typology of suspension. Wolfe examines three formal devices in addition to Milton’s use of present tense verbs: contrafactuals, conditional statements, and hypotheticals. Contrafactuals are “past-tense, contrary to fact statements that usually follow the pattern, ‘And now X might have happened, had not (or ‘else’) Y intervened,’ . . . [they] appear frequently . . . [and] work to foster narrative suspense and theological contingency as well as to dramatize the mysteriousness of divine grace” (317). Conditional statements include modal verbs that “denote present or past conditionality—what may happen or what might have happened rather than what will happen or what has happened” (357-58). Influenced by “conditional tenses, modes, and prepositional phrases” from Homer’s Odyssey, Milton uses conditional statements “as vehicles for

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38 Wolfe suggests how Milton’s formal choices portray divine power, Satan’s misinformed decision-making process, the human ability to decide, and, critically, how Milton accommodates providence to human understanding.
justifying the ways of God to men” (358). To explain hypotheticals, Wolfe provides “until” and “if” clauses as examples, which she notices appear more frequently in books 11 and 12. My chapter considers suspensions in which conditional statements and hypotheticals operate; in addition to these types of suspension, the passages I examine contain suspended syntax, punctuation that delays forward movement, and negations. Synchronicity operates when categories of time come together, and if the historical future is one of those categories, “shall” and “will” are often a part of the formal construction.40

One exemplary moment of suspension occurs during Adam’s conversation with Raphael in book 5. After hearing from Raphael that he must “stand” in obedience, Adam replies,

‘. . . Thy words
Attentive, and with more delighted ear
Divine instructor, I have heard, then when
Cherubic songs by night from neighbouring hills
Aerial music send: nor knew I not
To be both will and deed created free;
Yet that we never shall forget to love
Our maker, and obey him whose command
Single, is yet so just, my constant thoughts

39 See Wolfe, p. 360: “Particularly in the final two books of Paradise Lost, during which Adam and Eve learn to live in the indefinite future that defines their fall existence, Milton relies heavily on many of the conditional phrases—in particular ‘until’ and ‘if’ clauses—that Homer frequently uses to convey future contingency” (360).
40 We will see more explicit examples of synchronicity in Michael’s prophetic revelation during Books 8-12. In the next chapter, I will closely examine some of these moments of synchronicity.
Assured me and still assure: though what thou tellst

Hath passed in heaven, some doubt within me move,

But more desire to hear, if thou consent,

The full relation, which must needs be strange,

Worthy of sacred silence to be heard;

And we have yet large day, for scarce the Sun

Hath finished half his journey, and scarce begins

His other half in the great zone of heaven.’ (5.544-560)

This passage surprises our expectations in several ways. The syntactic stops, punctuation marks, negations, and the conditional word “if” work together to arrest our reading experience. Milton first creates the suspension operating in this passage by opening with “Thy words,” the object of Adam’s subject-verb clause “I have heard.” The enjambment in line 544, the modifier “attentive,” and the prepositional phrase “with more delighted eare” are situated between the object and the verb, and the colon delays the sentence; these features interrupt our reading of the sentence’s main clause. The suspension in the lines parallels Adam’s disconnect with Raphael’s message. Adam’s words could not be more ironic, for he has certainly missed the full effect of divine warning. Because his sensory response is more pronounced than his awareness of the message’s content, Adam recognizes the medium before attending to the genre. The suspensions in lines 544-547 promote our entering in to Adam’s sensory experience. Narrowing the gap between

41 Raphael says,

Attend: That thou art happy, owe to God;
That thou continu'st such, owe to thy self,
That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
This was that caution giv'n thee; be advised. (5.520-523)

See also lines 5.524-543.
reader and subject, suspension in this passage encourages us to think about both what Adam hears and the way he relates his experience: with a slow tempo. To make sense of what he has heard, Adam turns to a memory, the angels’ voices echoing from afar, yet this retrospective turn does not help him to understand obedience.

Adam’s utterance discloses his reaction to Raphael’s words, his response to learning that he might swerve in his love for God, his request to gain knowledge, and his assessment of the temporal moment that he is in. This moment evinces Adam’s dawning perception of Raphael’s text, and the context: Adam’s personal relationship with God, and his immediate temporal situation. Like other passages of suspension, this one reveals that Adam is out of step with the narrative he hears. While Adam experiences moments in which he is disconnected from the narrative in books 5 through 8, Adam’s post-lapsarian conversations with Michael in books 11 and 12 contain synchronous language which reflects that Adam is catching on to his role in a cosmos that providence oversees. Each angel comes to clarify providential temporality to Adam so that he might comprehend his role in time with accuracy.

Here, Adam is out of step with the narrative; just as the passage contains formal interruptions, what we learn disrupts our expectations. The double negative causes us to stop for a moment: “nor knew I not / To be both will and deed created free” (5.548-49). Dennis Sigmon observes that Milton’s double negatives create an ambiguous meaning: “in language two negatives do not really, as some logicians would have us believe, make a positive. Consequently, saying that something is ‘not unseasonable’ does not mean that it is ‘seasonable.’ Milton’s use of litotes (double negative understatement), then, does not allow the reader to go all the way back to the . . . concept ‘seasonable’ but requires him to
stay in the *indefinite* area between the two poles” (329, my emphasis). The negations that follow the opening sentence continue relaying Adam’s failure to see that the condition of obedience is a precarious one. This is a pivotal moment in the narrative. If Adam is to understand he will be tempted, he must grasp that his obedience may falter, so his failure to grasp the message is troubling, since it introduces the possibility that he doesn’t quite understand it. The passage is an example of an important reoccurrence in the epic: an individual in the process of making sense of his role in relationship to time. Here, Adam thinks he understands his role in the garden—he thinks it is eternal—and with God; he assumes condition is unchanging, yet he does not yet see that his relationship to God can change. Milton’s use of formal suspension encourages readers to reflect on characters’ self-perception, and to examine the extent to which these self-perceptions are aligned with a providential perspective on human temporality. These suspended moments also encourage readers to think about how the individual is out of step with a true picture of his role according to providence.

Adam’s reply suggests his limited understanding of conditional obedience, a fundamental characteristic in his relationship to God, and role in time. Grossman assumes that Adam understands Raphael’s message:

> To truly be an author to himself, Adam must recognize his ability to change the course of his existence by his acts, and he must be able to

42 Thomas Corns briefly considers Milton’s use of the prefix “un-” before he asks but not does not fully answer this question: “why should he, more than most, define what is by what is not?” pp. 85-86. For a more recent analysis of Milton’s use of negations, see Annabel Patterson’s chapter on “Negativity.” Using the description of Satan as an example, he “Saw undelighted all delight,” Patterson says that Milton “is not just using his philological reflexes at such moments, but demanding that we pay attention to what is truly a negative, truly a positive, though the mere grammatical form of words and sentences may at first glance obscure that extraordinarily difficult distinction,” p. 189.
envision alternative futures as the putative consequences of alternative choices. Raphael’s promise of improvement through continued obedience and punishment for disobedience introduces more sophisticated notions of moral responsibility and consequence into Adam’s mind. *Adam now knows* that he can either improve or fall. (Grossman 93, emphasis mine) 43

The quote implies that Raphael’s narration of the War in Heaven is enough for Adam to understand his ability to obey or disobey, and Grossman is right to suggest that Adam must learn to imagine possible outcomes. Still, Adam does not quite understand how to imagine those outcomes in the present. According to Grossman, the narrative reveals the value of retrospection and prospection.

Exploring suspension adds to Grossman’s argument because suspension not only shows that an individual *is* mentally etching his role in time but also *to what extent* this process occurs, and the complexities that are involved in a shaping of one’s role. Examples of suspension and synchronicity open up the experience of unfallen time, and the subjective experience of historical time. When we see to what extent an individual understands or misunderstands his or her role, suspension often brings different temporal categories together. Suspension can reveal how a subjective experience of time intersects with its historical importance, and how the subjective experience of time occludes the providential view. This device emphasizes a character’s point of view and his or her harmony or disharmony with providence. Some moments of suspension close the distance between a reader and the subject to make the character’s point of view central.

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43 According to Grossman, Raphael’s narration is important to Adam because it will help him to repent of his sin after the fall (95).
Registering Time in Hell and Foreseeing History in Heaven

Early in *Paradise Lost*, before we reach Eden, formal suspension and corresponding moments of synchronicity prompt readers to consider relationships between temporal categories: the subjective experience of time, history, eternity, and providence. To encourage readers to think about these categories, Milton juxtaposes different perspectives. In passages of synchronicity, Milton offers a portrayal of God that is more distant than his portrayal of Satan, the unfallen angels, Adam, and Eve. One pair of passages illustrates suspension in Hell and Heaven. Because we see Milton reworking similar moments of suspension and synchronicity, reading the passages in this order prompts us to look back and think about how providence reads historical time.

Specifically, in books 2 and 3, the narrator closes the distance between the reader and the experience of both fallen and unfallen angels; he brings together eternity and subjective time to illuminate the fallen angels’ experience, while he negotiates eternity, history, and providence to relate the unfallen angels’ perspective.

In book 2, after Satan leaves hell, the narrator depicts what eternal torment feels like for the fallen angels. Each of them hopes to “find / Truce to his restless thoughts, and entertain / The irksome hours, till his great chief return” (2.525-27). The word “hours” compares the angels’ experience of eternal punishment to human temporal intervals, yet we know what seems an hour is, in reality, unending torment. Noticing Milton’s use of the word “hour” in hell, Welch supplies the *OED* definition to explain that Milton means a “‘short space of time, more or less than an hour’” (5). Milton may refer to only a temporal interval, but by using the word “hours,” he humanizes their punishment,
because it makes eternity palpable in a subjective way. Faced with their purposeless existence, devoid of Satan’s voice to misrepresent their condition, the angels turn to various activities, hoping to find respite from painful tedium. Milton dramatizes the effect of the song:

Their Song was partial, but the harmony
(What could it less when spirits immortal sing?)
Suspended hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience. (2.552-555)

Music draws all the angels’ attention at once, thereby creating a pause that suspends their state and that Christopher Ricks has called an example of the “delicate and subtle life of Milton’s verse” (78), and he informs us that Newton points out that the grammar reflects the content. Newton writes, “the Poet Himself seems to be Doing what he describes’ in praising the[se] lines . . . ‘The harmony suspended Hell; but is it not much better with the parenthesis coming between? which suspends as it were the event, raises the reader’s attention, and gives a greater force to the sentence’” (Ricks 79).

Just as the sound captures the entire audience, the grammatical elements disrupt the syntax of the sentence. The conditional word “could” implies that the quality of angelic harmony exists in both hell and heaven, and the musical interval points to the longer temporal gap between Satan’s absence and return. Satan’s absence and the musical interlude parody the second

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44 Welch briefly comments on the use of Milton’s phrase “in an hour” in 1.697-99: “and in an hour / What in an age they with incessant toil / And hands innumerable scarce perform,” (qtd. in Welch, p. 5).
45 When Adam responds to Raphael’s voice, he will do so in a way that parallels the fallen angels’ response to harmony.
46 Ricks also refers to 2.910-219 as another passage that illustrates this characteristic of Milton’s style, p. 79.
coming of Jesus and waiting for His appearing. Left without their leader, the angels can only fill the time. But the interval, like Satan's journey, ultimately raises false hopes; his return will not change their condition (in fact, God will later transform them into something even worse). While Christians are encouraged to think about the effects of their actions, since Jesus is coming back to judge their deeds, reward them for those deeds, and usher them in to heaven, the fallen angels sing only to fill the time.

Although the effect of harmony continues in Pandemonium, it is only a remnant of heavenly harmony. The song itself is “partial.” Fowler notes the word means “prejudiced,” but in terms of time, the word means that even though it can rouse the crowd for a time, hell-bound harmony is missing a critical component (fn 552-3). At this moment, we are not sure yet what it lacks. In book 3, a scene of celestial harmony illustrates that the most important part of the song is its providential vantage point:

No sooner had the almighty ceased, but all
The multitude of angels with a shout
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy, heaven rung
With jubilee, and loud hosannas filled
The eternal regions: lowly reverent
Towards either throne they bow, and to the ground
With solemn adoration down they cast

47 See Charis Charalampous, who traces the significance of musical harmony in Milton’s poetry to its power to lead one nearer to God, pp. 139-151. For her, Milton’s use of harmony in the epic and his shorter poems serves to “drive us closer to the divine” and “to suspend the effect of fallen dualism: tainted understanding,” p. 139. She briefly discusses this passage on p. 149.
Their crowns inwove with amaranth and gold,

Immortal amaranth, a flower which once

In Paradise, fast by the tree of life

Began to bloom, but soon for man’s offence

To heaven removed where first it grew, there grows,

And flowers aloft shading the fount of life,

And where the river of bliss through midst of heaven

Rolls o’er Elisian Flours her Amber stream;

With these that never fade the spirits elect

Bind their resplendent locks enwreathed with beams,

Now in loose garlands thick thrown off, the bright

Pavement that like a sea of jasper shone

Empurpled with celestial roses smiled. (3.344-364)

The narrator begins a description in 351-52, where he describes the angels action, offering their crowns in worship, and he will pick up the action again in 361-62. Yet in line 353, the flower amaranth’s story interrupts the casting of crowns to symbolize the impact of the fall on creation. The preposition “with amaranth and gold” shifts the focus to the flower, while the “but soon” cuts short its bloom. It’s as if the flower leaves heaven, buds in Eden, disappears, and reappears in an instant. For a second, historical time is a blip in heaven’s eternal chorus. The moment describes the fall’s consequences, the removal of the flower, even as it minimizes historical time and magnifies the all-knowing providential perspective. Yet at the same time, it suggests that from a heavenly perspective, even a small flower is not too small for God to see it and know its past,
present, and future. The flower’s return to heaven anticipates what the Son’s sacrifice accomplishes, a redeeming of matter, just as He will redeem mankind. The celestial choir sings from joy because they have heard the providential plan of salvation, in which the Son will sacrifice himself, undoing what Satan has begun, and after the Son’s return, He will bring the redeemed to a glorious state with Him (3.298-302, 3.335-338). The interruption of the flower’s story thus points ahead to humans’ entrance into heaven, for they, like the flower, can be redeemed.

Anticipating Fallen Time, and Looking Forward to Redemption

The previous examples reflect how suspension portrays the difference between a fallen and unfallen experience of eternal realms. Another instance of suspension will specifically open up Satan’s perspective of his role in relation to history. The narrator dramatizes Satan’s pause on the edge of Chaos, where Satan delays his mission for a moment:

. . . Into this wild abyss,
The womb of nature and perhaps her grave,
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
But all these in their pregnant causes mixed
Confusedly, and which thus must ever fight,
Unless the almighty maker them ordain
His dark materials to create more worlds,
Into this wild abyss the wary fiend
Stood on the brink of hell and looked a while,
Pondering his voyage; for no narrow frith
He had to cross. Nor was his ear less pealed
With noises loud and ruinous (to compare
Great things with small) then when Bellona storms,
With all her battering Engines bent to raze
Some capital city; or less then if this frame
Of heaven were falling, and these elements
In mutiny had from her axle torn

The steadfast earth. (2.910-927) 48

Because the pause magnifies our awareness of Satan’s thought process—he is
“pondering” the journey—his pause suggests that he can move ahead according to his
own designs, as if he has the power to enact something that escapes God’s foresight. The
clauses standing in the way tellingly juxtapose God’s power with the representation of
Satan’s anticipatory pause: the elements in Chaos “thus must ever fight / unless the
almighty maker them ordain / His dark materials to create more worlds” (2.914-916).
Because the prepositional phrase “into this wild abyss” and the clause beginning with
“unless” delay our reading that the “fiend / Stood” (2.910, 917, 915), the narrator asks us
to consider what Satan overlooks right in front of him, the very elements that only God

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48 Ricks quotes Richardson’s comments on this passage: “‘tis Observable the Poet
Himself seems to be Doing what he Describes, for the Period begins at 910. Then he goes
not On Directly, but Lingers; giving an Idea of Chaos before he Enters into it,” p. 79.
Because it is a liminal moment in which the word “raze” is used, I am surprised that
Wolfe does not mention this passage in “Part 1. The Razor’s Edge” of her chapter, in
which she traces Milton’s use of the phrase the phrase “razor’s edge” back to Homer’s
Iliad. She explores how Homer’s grammatical choices influenced Miltonic scenes of
“deliberation” in Paradise Lost, pp. 305-310, and she has a section on “Satanic
Pondering,” pp. 327-337.
has power to control. The “unless” clause suggests that if Satan were to speak here, nothing would happen. Continuing to build suspense, the narrator places a pause after “Pondering his voyage” by adding a colon. Will Satan see what we have—that the very elements of the universe are at God’s disposal, ready to be employed in his service, at his command? After the colon, we read, “for no narrow frith / He had to cross” (2.919-920). Here, the word “had” creates an ambiguous meaning. Perhaps Satan “had it to cross”—his step forward is obligatory, or perhaps he “had” to cross it to fulfill his plans—he takes the step after thinking about it.

We also see in this moment that Satan’s senses have led to a faulty assessment of his situation: the depth of the chasm and the crashing sounds confound his understanding. Satan’s sensory experience reflects his point of view: for him, the journey is challenging, for he must make a perilous flight across the chasm and persevere despite the noise. The narrator describes the sounds he hears with a conditional statement, as “if this frame / Of heaven were falling, and these elements / In mutiny had from her axle torn / The steadfast earth” (2.924-27, emphasis added). Because the conditional word “if” implies that the elements might collectively usurp the framework of the cosmos, sending the world into a state of disorder, this moment implies that Satan sees his move as potentially destroying what God has created.49 Although Satan imagines his journey is heroic, in lines 920-921, Satan is an auditor who experiences the realm, and not someone who can create in

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49 For a discussion of Milton’s depiction of Chaos and God’s creation in the realm, see Schwartz’s chapter on “Chaos vs. creation”: “In Milton’s scheme, creation, like all acts, becomes a choice—a choice, of course, that is freely made. Once made, the choice to create out of chaos must be made again and again,” p. 37.
Chaos. While this possibility is one that will not occur—we see God’s power holds sway—the suspension highlights Satan’s perspective. He hears what he hopes for in the noise around him, because he is bringing with him the disruption of a conscience that has rejected God’s ultimate power. The sounds of war echo Satan’s intention to “raze” the new race of man, and yet Satan misrecognizes the sounds as he misunderstands the ultimate effects of his power; he is encountering the war within himself.

While Satan does not see the effects of his role on history, the narrator’s use of suspension proleptically marks the beginning of fallen human temporality. This scene sets the tone for later passages because Milton uses a number of characteristics to interrupt the reader’s anticipation and consequently highlight Satan’s inaccurate self-perception. Satan is the first individual character whose subjective experience is not aligned with truth. Whereas later, Adam’s thought process will seem misguided, Satan’s deliberation fully occludes providence. Satan’s pause is more than an act of deliberation. Because human history hinges on Satan’s liminal point in space and time, it is the beginning of his interference with the moral direction of the human race. Before Satan enters Eden, Adam and Eve enjoy what is an eternal state in which they are in unison with each other and with God, with no (foreseeable) end to their condition, until death, a consequence of the fall, situates humans in a linear timeline instead of eternal state.

50 Danielle St. Hilaire has argued that Satan does create in the poem. She says, “because Satan’s activity in the poem has very real effects on Milton’s world, that activity is indeed creative, or more specifically, re-creative,” p. 17. For Hilaire, “satanic creation . . . is always a self-creation,” p. 17. She considers negation as well as Satan’s questions in her evidence of this argument. See her chapter 1, pp. 21-51.

51 See the previous note. “Raze” here is connected to the internal state of war within Satan. Wolfe explains that “the eager razors edge” appears in Chapman’s translation of the Iliad (10.173-4), a scene in which “Nestor wakes Diomedes to communicate to his fellow Achaean the urgency of this decisive moment in the war,” p. 305. Milton uses the phrase “razors edge” in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce. See Wolfe, p. 305.
This moment, which anticipates the beginning of fallen time, also portrays a providential plan that anticipates such a Satanic move. What Satan reads is a necessary part of his role in dismantling God’s design—“he had to cross”—points to divine mercy. Satan will physically “cross” the wide gap, yet if this moment anticipates historical time, it points to what God will do to redeem man. Crossing through Chaos, Satan will play a role in humans’ separation from a perfect relationship with God; yet the word “cross” betrays Satan’s limited knowledge, unaware of the Son’s ready and willing sacrifice. Dying on a cross, where he will hear the jeers of those who mock him, the Son will mediate this separation.

This suspension in Chaos marks the way an individual can be out of synch with the narrative that he is in. Satan’s pause anticipates the later moments in which Adam senses the discord of the fallen cosmos in the rhythm of his heart, and fails to grasp the meaning of death (9.838-856, 10.720-844). Those moments identify two features of human fallen temporality: the death of the body and the lack of knowledge about when death will come. Adam’s experience in books 9 and 10 reveals that he is disconnected from the individual story of his life and his life purpose in a providential view of history, as Satan experiences. While Satan’s pause reveals his subjective experience of time, the narrator offers counterpoints to Satan’s perspective in order that we might question the depiction of fallen power. Two moments of synchronicity ask us to re-read this pause: God’s creation in Chaos, and Adam’s definition of eternity and history after hearing divine prophecy.

The pause in Book 2 contrasts the account God’s creation in Book 7, a passage of synchronicity. The first passage presents Satan, who is out of step with the voice of God,
and the second represents the harmonious relationship between God and the elements at the smallest level of matter. Whereas Satan stands in opposition to providence, thinking about his journey that will alter Adam and Eve’s relationship with God, it is the angels who stand in awe while they witness God entering Chaos: “On heavenly ground they stood, and from the shore / They viewed the vast immeasurable abyss” (7.209-10). On the same liminal space that Satan will occupy, the angels go no further than the shore. In line with their divinely-given role, they are spatially on the line; spectators to the soon-to-be-formed world, they stand and see, modeling right action as both still and in motion.52

While the passage includes colons, it does not include syntactic interruptions, and there is no moment in which an action is delayed beyond its expected point. The angels wait for

52 The angels’ posture in this moment is similar to the posture described in the Son’s request during the War in Heaven, that the angels “stand only and behold” (6.810). The angels’ stillness also recalls the posture that Patience recommends in Sonnet 19: “They also serve who only stand and wait,” line 14, p. 158. Fish compares the Nativity Ode to the final line in Sonnet 19: “That is what everyone is doing as the poem ends, serving by doing nothing,” p. 528. Fish argues that, for Milton, action denotes one’s sinfulness (a move that signals a turn away from God). In contrast, a right attitude is one that accepts the “perpetual drama” of a “never-ending obligation to be true to the best one knows, to keep in tune with it, to be ready to serve it, whatever that may mean, even if it means withholding action (in the gross sense) and doing nothing,” p. 528. To the extent that Milton portrays the longing for “action” or “drama” as contrary to what God desires, I would agree with Fish: in Paradise Lost, we see this portrayal of “action” before the fall of humankind, when Satan pauses in Chaos, for example. But for the purposes of my argument, Adam’s and Eve’s position after the fall does not reflect the “perpetual drama” that Fish describes. After the fall, providence opens up the possibility for humans to act with freedom; once reconciled to God through grace, humans can make their own choices as they keep providence in mind. Michael’s pause in book 12.1-5 is one that offers Adam the chance to interrupt. Even though Adam chooses not to, he has the opportunity to act, which suggests such an action would not have been outside of God’s design.
God to create, and He does; He speaks, and Chaos becomes still. The angels observe the elements, perfectly in tune with divine voice. God calls out,

   Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,
   Said the omnific Word, your discord end:
   Nor staid, but on the wings of cherubim
   Uplifted, in paternal glory rode
   Far into chaos, and the world unborn;
   For chaos heard his voice: him all his train
   Followed in bright procession to behold
   Creation, and the wonders of his might. (7.216-223)

Unlike Satan, God does not stop to think about what He will do, and He has the power to quell the turbulence. What is missing from this passage is the point of view that allows us to see what God is thinking about, and this lack of suspended language increases the distance between the reader and Milton’s portrayal of God. In the passage describing Satan’s pause, “stood” is the verb we wait for. Because the word depicts inaction where we expected action, suspense is created, which draws attention to the phrase that follows, “pondering his voyage,” where Satan pictures his efforts. Contrasting that moment, in book 7, we hear God’s words verbatim and read his actions, but we are not surprised by them.

Milton makes Satan’s point of view apparent, but the book 7 passage operates on subjects and proximate verbs to make God’s actions central. For example, the prepositional phrase “on the wings of cherubim” in 217 describing God’s movement follows the negation “nor staid.” Other simple verbs stating God’s action ring across the
passage: he “rode,” “He took . . . prepared,” “centered . . . turned,” “And said,” “created” (7.219, 225, 228, 230, 232). The simple past verbs make the representation of God different from that of Satan and, as we will see later, Adam: while God is able to form the cosmos, we do not read what he is contemplating, or enter in to his sensory experience. This relation using the simple past fits with Wolfe’s observation that Milton’s verb tense portrays God as existing in an eternal present.53 Whereas Satan’s pause in Chaos contains suspended syntax and anticipates fallen, linear time, verbs describing God underline his omnipotent, ever-present, omniscient perspective.

Satan’s pause in the abyss makes noticeable his distorted viewpoint, yet Milton will ultimately correct this moment in book 12 with a moment of synchronicity. This passage represents an endpoint to Satanic mis-perception of his role in time. The example from book XII indicates how Milton offers passages of suspension that contrast synchronicity. One passage in particular suggests that human history can be reconciled with a providential plan, and that humans can understand that such a plan exists. After Michael shares divine prophecy with Adam, Adam is able to align history and eternity with providence:

‘He ended; and thus Adam last replied.

How soon hath thy prediction, seer blest,

Measured this transient world, the race of time,

Till time stand fixed: beyond is all abyss,

Eternity, whose end no eye can reach.

53 See Wolfe, who says, “Paradise Lost consistently represents God as speaking the present tense, at times shifting abruptly from past to present or vice versa (as at PL 6.26 and 6.669-78) in order to highlight the discrepancy between divine pan-temporality and the limited, sequential temporality of human narrative” (357)
Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,
Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill
Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;
Beyond which was my folly to aspire.’ (12.553-561)

When Satan looks forward in the abyss of Chaos, the moment anticipates the beginning of historical time; after the fall, Adam imagines eternity as an abyss that only God comprehend, and sees that linear history will be enfolded in eternity. Because he is able to understand how these categories are working together, this is a moment of synchronicity. Before the fall, Adam does not clearly understand the purpose of Raphael’s narrative, or respond properly to it. In this passage, there is a definite marking of the “end” of Michael’s words, and we hear from Adam what he has learned about temporal structures from Michael’s narrative. Adam becomes aware that his life will follow a linear path that ends with his death. Now that he will no longer dwell endlessly in Eden, he defines eternity as past his human comprehension. Adam’s perception of his relationship to God here contrasts the earlier moment in book 2, where Satan sets out on his journey. Satan, fresh out from hell, is preparing to enter Chaos; Adam is preparing to move forward out of Eden and into the rest of the world. Understanding his role in time, Adam looks forward to eternity, taking both his historical significance and God’s power over time into perspective. He implies that providence’s eye can span eternity, and not ours (12.557). As Welch describes, “The significant word ‘measure’ reasserts the opposition between ‘this transient world,’ with its measurable time, and the foreign climes and times that lie beyond the visible cosmos. Adam and Eve are to parent a ‘race of time’ which will, in fact, run a ‘race of time,’ . . . The end of the world, like its
beginning stands beyond measure, in a vision of eternity that ‘no [mortal] eye can reach” (13). The knowledge Adam gains from Michael shapes Adam’s historical awareness—he is human and does not have power over time. Prophecy is necessary for him to be able to properly understand temporal and atemporal structures.

The lack of suspension in Adam’s response makes the contrast between this passage and Satan’s pause in book 2 apparent. Although the passage contains a colon, what follows is linked closely to the words before the colon. “Time stand fixed” and the “abyss” are words standing in for “eternity.” It is only after prophetic revelation that Adam becomes aware of his limitations in history and his ability to understand how his role in history is related to eternity and providence. A proleptic sight of history allows Adam to see more clearly his part in a divine perspective. This moment suggests that to continue imagining his story as separate from God would be to re-enact Satan’s voyage, in which he imagines rising above God’s providential plan. Adam realizes that an active remembering of God’s constant power over time will help him to avoid Satanic swelling of imagined importance: “Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best, / And love with fear the only God, to walk / As in his presence, ever to observe / His providence” (12.562-565).

The present tense verbs connect his words to God and mirror his clear understanding of the text he has heard. Likewise, he understands his relationship with God; he is a human in part of a linear timeframe that anticipates death, and eternity with God, which Adam defines as “the faithful death the gate of life” (12.571). Adam’s synchronous language reflects that humans can gain proper awareness of their roles in time, just as they can be reconciled with God.

54 Whereas the use of the word “vessel” represents Satan on his journey (2.1043), Adam sees himself as a “vessel” holding knowledge.
Books 4 and 5: Satanic Suspension in Eden

Once Satan arrives in Paradise, Milton juxtaposes moments of suspension that display Satan’s fallen perspective with moments of synchronicity that portray Eden’s unfallen state. The narrator uses suspension to bring together history and providence, and to negotiate Satan’s subjective framing of his story with a providential view. The synchronous passages make real Eden’s present, wherein diurnal time’s pleasant, unchanging routines starkly contrast Satan’s tormented present. Satan’s enmity with providence influences his experience of time: for him, it is a never-ending rotation between imagining what his past might have been and his future could be, and realizing that his relationship with God negates those possibilities. Although Grossman is not primarily concerned with Milton’s formal choices, he observes that “‘if . . . but’” statements are one characteristic of Satan’s language that reflects his subjective experience of time: “This ‘fallen conditional’ construction is the grammar of a temporality in which the future is simply the negation of the past, the medium of a compulsive undoing . . . the syntax of Satan’s language is the concrete expression of his fallen subjectivity, and its patterns can be related to the conceptual and epistemological constraints of the fallen state” (132-33). This feature represents Satan’s false reality in which he appears powerful: “The deity is overthrown not in heaven but in the fallen sensibility, which replaces it with a fantasy of personal omnipotence . . . Without recourse to intersubjective ‘fact,’ which Satan must negate to preserve the illusion of

55 Grossman describes that Adam and Eve “experience . . . time . . . as a round of pleasant and varied repetitions to be marked by an action of propagation that will be the material measure of their duration” (135).
omnipotence, he is doomed to oscillate forever between the ‘ifs’ and ‘butts’ of a profligate fancy” (132-33). Within the passage that Grossman presents to exemplify this idea, Satan critically assesses the world around him in terms of his fallen consciousness. Rather than “undoing,” Satan is returning to the world he once inhabited and articulating not, simply, as Grossman puts it, the “what might have been,” but the might-yet-cannot be. The conditional word that follows the “but” clause is not simply a canceling of the past, but Satan’s re-imagining of what it might be like if he could only go back:

‘... but I in none of these
Find place or refuge; and the more I see
Pleasures about me, so much more I feel
Torment within me, as from the hateful siege
Of contraries, all good to me becomes
Bane, and in Heav’n much worse would be my state.’ (9.118-23)

The most important part of this sentence is the conditional with which Satan ends, because the conclusion of his “if . . . but” thinking is the conditional “would be.” It shows his creative properties can construe a future that cannot be. His words reveal the way his subjectivity can transform his reality, in his mind, to what it cannot ever be. The building blocks of matter by which God creates the world are, to him, a “siege / Of contraries.” Components of matter with the potential to become whatever God wants them to be are transformed into destructive elements: “all good to me becomes / Bane” (22-23). In exchanging his present for an impossible future, Satan is creating, but it only amounts to a misinformed perspective. Whereas synchronicity in book 4 portrays the divinely-

56 As he continues, Grossman argues that readers can see Satan’s influence on Eve’s language (145).
bestowed harmony in Edenic natural rhythms of daily life (about to be dismantled), the suspended language associated with Satan foreshadows how the fall will influence the human experience of time. Specifically, Satan disrupts both the divinely created diurnal rhythms in Eden and Eve’s experience of them. Formal suspension grammatically delays the forward movement of the sentence, and suspension likewise stalls the action in the narrative, thereby opening up the human experience before the fall to relay its providential and historical significance.

If Satan is concerned with the might-yet-cannot-be, the narrator is, too, especially as he opens book 4 and connects Satan’s descent into Eden with the impending apocalypse. It is an odd moment where the narrator looks back to the fall and forward to the apocalypse at the same time, even as he is all too aware of the present (for Adam and Eve) threat. He cries out,

Oh for that warning voice, which he who saw

The Apocalypse heard cry in heaven aloud

Then when the dragon, put to second rout,

Came furious down to be revenged on men,

Woe to the inhabitants on earth! . . . (IV.1-5)

The enjambments in these lines slow the unraveling of the sentence and heighten the immediacy of the prophecy. In line 1, the narrator separates the allusion to John, “he,” from its verb, “heard,” by adding adjective clause, and we do not read the cry that he hears, “Woe to the inhabitants on earth,” until the end of the sentence. Before that exclamation, the threat—the dragon—appears in an adverbial clause, which interrupts the warning (3). The enjambment after the word “dragon” suspends the revelation of his
action, “came furious down,” just like this very opening moment is, in its entirety, delaying Satan’s descent into Eden while it is representing its importance. The allusion to the dragon is an event that precedes the end of historical time (the Son’s return and judgment). The narrator encourages readers to think about how the present moment is a part of God’s providential timeline; God stands outside of history and in control of it, even though the present threat is one the narrator cannot restrain, yet wishes that he could.

The narrator longs for a prophetic voice that could warn Adam and Eve, yet such a warning is impossible, and the Satanic perspective that appears reminds us that what will happen for Adam and Eve in this poem has already happened in history. Still, that doesn’t stop the narrator from imagining what might have occurred if he could have alerted them:

. . . that now,

While time was, our first parents had been warned
The coming of their secret foe, and scaped
Haply so scaped his mortal snare; for now
Satan, now first inflamed with rage, came down,
The tempter ere the accuser of mankind,
To wreak on innocent frail man his loss
Of that first battle, and his flight to hell: (4.5-12)

The narrator juxtaposes various pauses that conflate the present and past, such as “now” and “time was,” with enjambments that suggest an alternative ending to the fall. The

57 See Clare Kinney, who implies that Satan is the counterpoint to the Miltonic narrator. See Kinney, p. 158. She also examines Milton’s pauses on pp. 144-45.
enjambments in lines 5-12 highlight what that alternative might have been, where “had been warned” continues beyond the line; what Adam and Eve might have “scaped,” Satan’s “mortal snare,” is not disclosed until after the line break between 7 and 8. The narrator imagines for a moment what could have been, and has he does so, repeats himself after the enjammed line “scaped / haply so scaped” (7-8). Yet the enjambment at the end of line 8, after “now,” speaks to Satan’s immediate threat, and we are asked to pause before learning that he “came down” (9). The pauses that enjambment, syntax, semicolons, and colons create in this 31-line sentence dramatize Satan’s present and proleptic fallenness and his literal descent before our very eyes. The narrator’s repetition of “now” continues to ring out within the passage (16, 23, 27, 30) to unfold Satan’s subjective experience of time, which the narrator compares to a cycle of distorted sleeping and awakening. Satan experiences this cycle as if he is waking up from the “horror and doubt” that mask his awareness of his true condition (18). He slips between what he anticipates doing and knowing he is deluded: “. . . now conscience wakes despair / That slumbered, wakes the bitter memory / Of what he was, what is, and what must be / Worse” (4.23-26, emphasis added). Although Satan conceives of his journey into Eden as a glorious feat, the narrator’s opening reads Satan’s efforts to be no more than a role in the dreams of his imagination, just like the might-yet-cannot-be warning voice that the narrator hopes for.

Both the narrator’s suspensions and Satan’s attest to Satan’s fallen perspective, one in which he imagines alternatives for his present condition. In his complaint, Satan uses conditional language when he pictures what it would be like if pardon were a possibility, a story line that cannot materialize. In this passage, the conditional “could”
and “would” occur frequently: Satan says, “But say I could repent and could obtain / By act of grace my former state; how soon / Would height recall high thoughts, how soon unsay / What feigned submission swore” (4.93-96). Yet envisioning a future that is not possible only results in a recognition that he will repeat what he has already done. I agree with Grossman, who finds that

the fallen subject, attempting to author himself of herself in actions, imagines a hypothetical outcome to the considered action . . . [and] shuttles endlessly between an anticipated future and a determinate set of alternative actions . . . Satan's entrapment in an always hypothetical present is grounded in this experience of restlessness. His peculiar role as the archetype and progenitor of fallen subjectivity precludes his recourse to either of the strategies available to fallen men. (133-134)

Satan admits, “[it] would but lead me to a worse relapse / And heavier fall: so should I purchase deare / Short intermission bought with double smart” (4.100-102). While Satan dwells on what might have been and what might be, he recognizes it is impossible even while he posits its potential effect, “so should I purchase . . .” (101). Turning from this line of thought, Satan thinks about the role he might play in the story of mankind, and interrupted syntax marks this shift: he encourages himself to “behold instead / Of us outcast, exiled, his new delight, / Mankind created” (105-107). When he nearly turns his focus from himself, an enjambed phrase about his state interrupts that thought, “instead / Of us” (105-106). The grammar reflects his inability to see without reflecting on his own role. Thinking about man only leads him to speculate on what he might gain, “more than half perhaps” of the cosmos. Although Satan sees a possibility, the narrator uses
conditional language to counter Satan’s point of view: passion “dimmed his face / . . . and betrayed / Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld” (4.113, 117, emphasis added). The narrator’s use of conditional wording calls into question Satan’s perverted self-perception. Although Satan imagines how he might interject himself into the divine plan, there are other points of view: his empty audience, and God’s providential eye, and Uriel, as we soon learn.

The opening to book 4 identifies Satan as the harbinger of suspension in Eden’s landscape of perfect balance and harmony. The one who will instigate the beginning of fallen time, he inserts himself into Adam and Eve’s life in the garden, especially Eve’s consciousness, and disrupts the circadian patterns that determine peaceful sleeping, waking, and working, as Satan’s own subjective experience has been altered. While God’s presence creates concord, as we have seen when God creates in Chaos, Eden is portrayed in a language of synchronicity attesting to the peaceful pre-lapsarian condition of life in the garden. Pre-lapsarian time may be difficult to understand, because it is not historical, and for that reason, Milton relies on diurnal time to help us experience it. Anthony Welch remarks on the diurnal rhythms of Eden before the fall: “Only in the garden before the fall—but everywhere there—are we constantly aware of the comforting cyclical movement of time from morning to evening and back to morning” (Welch 10). He explains,

The narrator takes pains to show paradise to us at each time of day, to render up the distinct pleasures offered by its daily cycles. These descriptions are supported by constant references to the circling of the celestial bodies . . . Time is stable, ordered, and measurable for the benefit of humanity—until the Fall begins to
crumple the temporal structures of paradise into the inscrutability characteristic of
the other timescapes in the poem. (10)

Whereas Satan is stuck in a “now” in which he frames his story by imagining that he has
power surpassing that of God, Eden exists in a “now” of sensory bliss that arrests Satan’s
senses the further he enters it. Yet the “now” of Eden is alive, and not tangled, or
suspended; it is Satan’s movement that is delayed as he moves inward (4.153, 156). After
an epic simile describes the kind of “delay” he undergoes, we read that his movement is
“pensive and slow” (159-171, 173). But while his slow movements suggest his internal
chaos, even downtime in Eden is peaceful. Diurnal temporality in the garden is steady,
predictable, and harmonious:

    Now came still evening on, and twilight gray

    Had in her sober livery all things clad;

    Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,

    They to their grassy couch, these to their nests

    Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;

    She all night long her amorous descant sung;

    Silence was pleased: now glowed the Firmament

    With living sapphires: Hesperus that led

    The starry Host, rode brightest, till the moon

    Rising in clouded majesty, at length

    Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,

    And o’er the dark her silver mantle threw. (4.598-609)
This passage is an example of the synchronous language that represents Edenic life, and its divinely-created rhythms of sleeping and waking. Here, night, silence, planetary bodies, and stars appear in harmony with one another, ushering in the time for sleep. The concord in Eden is not interrupted syntactically or with conditional statements, and it lacks a reference to historical time. Generating song that complements nocturnal silence, the nightingale’s wakefulness is part of its divinely-given role. Whereas “till” clauses often mark a post-lapsarian uncertainty of death, the “till” clause here introduces one final listener to God’s cosmic nocturne: the moon, whose arrival disturbs nothing (Wolfe 360). This moment relates the interrelationships between the cosmological and natural world, during a single moment when twilight lacks Satanic disruption. These diurnal patterns in nature set the pace for Adam and Eve’s daily activities: praising God, working, eating, and sleeping.

Commenting on this passage, Patricia Parker says that there is “progression without surprise,” p. 119. She goes on to read this passage as one that reflects Eve’s position as not yet fallen: “The twilight moment which for Eve represents a dangerous ‘staying,’ an interval which must be crossed, is here, through a series of such images, both dilated and ‘stayed,’” p. 119 Such moments are a kind of “threshold of choice,” p. 120. This “till” clause contrasts Eve’s response to her dream, where she says, “Such night till this I never pass’d” (5.31). Leslie Brisman explains the significance of Eve’s “till” clause after her dream: “we perceive the heavy change in a way we did not ‘till this.’ The new awareness of the difference, of what has changed, is like a dream of the difference that will be actualized with the fall,” p. 159.

For a discussion on twilight and noon as signifiers of liminal temporal and moral states in the epic, see Wolfe: “Paradise Lost represents the temporal interstices of twilight and noon as the horae momentum of the natural world: fleeting, decisive intervals that . . . mark the critical junctures at which arbitration occurs (or fails to occur) throughout the poem,” p. 350. In particular, she describes that the twilight of Book 4: “The ‘Twilight gray’ that descends upon the middle of Book 4 of Paradise Lost attires everything in a ‘sober liverie,’ a drabness that evokes Milton’s damp and foggy England, the ‘dim suffusion’ (3.26) of his blurry vision, and above all the ethical grisaille of his Eden, a place where moral distinctions are fuzzy and evil appears enshrouded in mist,” p. 351.
Once Satan enters the garden, he breaches the natural rhythm there, interrupting Eve’s sleep, and consequently, her peace upon waking. Two passages attest to the way he disturbs Eve’s night and day. Ithuriel and Zepho find Satan near Eve’s ear, where he is

Assaying by his devilish art to reach

The organs of her fancy, and with them forge

Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams,

Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint

The animal spirits that from pure blood arise

Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise

At least distempered, discontented thoughts,

Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires

Blown up with high conceits engendering pride. (4.801-809)

Satan hopes to shape what Eve sees and her perceptions of what she sees. The narrator uses suspension to pinpoint Satan’s purpose in fashioning these apparitions: “if . . . he might taint / The animal spirits,” he might also “raise” her self-perception to new heights (804-805, 806). The auxiliary “might” and conditional word “if” introduce the possibilities Satan hopes to make real, and the enjambed lines that follow depict his interruption to a natural pattern. The “animal spirits” are mentioned twice: while the spirits rise from “rivers pure,” Satan will “raise / At least distempered, discontented thoughts” (807). The enjambment across lines 804-805 and 806-807 connects the two descriptions, the second one of which informs us of Satan’s disruption to the spirits’ natural rising. Another word anticipates the widespread effects of Satan’s actions: “distempered” denotes Satan hopes to throw her thoughts out of balance, like elements of
matter out of synch. Shifting the make-up of her dreams, Satan’s disturbance points to the fall’s destruction of concord in nature. Satan hopes to dismantle Eve’s perspective, re-writing her purpose. Satan will “forge / illusions” and “raise . . . desires / Blown up with high conceits . . . ,” descriptions that suggest his intent to fabricate a storyline for Eve that expands her self-importance. Satan’s “raising” of Eve’s thoughts recalls the sounds he hears in Chaos, which are compared to the noises one hears “when Bellona storms, / With all her battering Engines bent to raze / Some capital city” (2.923-924). Harboring discord, he will now destroy with it, raising illusions to “raze” the race of man. If Eve begins to enlarge her vision of who she is, dreaming of herself with a false sense of her role, Satan will have successfully influenced her subjective experience to one that is like his own experience of time, the rocking back and forth between what might be and what is not true. Such a shift would fundamentally disrupt her participation in the harmonious Eden of God’s design.

To portray how Satan refashions Eve’s perception of her role, the narrator employs suspension, which anticipates Satan’s intentions in book 9. Early in book 5, a brief instance reflects how Satan’s endeavors continue to influence Eve’s waking moments even after Adam strives to console her and resume the sleep-praise-work cycle.

61 Brisman finds that “Eve’s dream creates a past that can be brought, in memory, to the moment of temptation . . . it gives . . . a sense of things that have been, a sense of history like that which Raphael’s rational discourse more overtly presents,” p. 159.
62 Grossman observes, “In book IX, Eve “begins to use the ‘fallen conditional’ construction that characterizes Satan’s speech. The thought that she is ‘perhaps secret’ initiates a series of fantastic suppositions about the possible selves she may craft to dissimulate her fallen state. However, while Satan’s fantasies and rationalizations are stopped by his despairing awareness of the ‘dismal situation of the damned,’ Eve’s speculations are restrained by a survival of ‘collateral love’ . . . Her imitation of Satan is a tragic departure, but after her fall she returns as best she can to her original teacher. Had love not arrested Even’s rationalizations, her subjectivity would have become identical to Satan’s as she descended into the isolation of a dream of omnipotence,” pp. 145-146.
in Eden. Nudging Eve to come work with him, for the garden awaits her presence, Adam says, “And let us to our fresh employments rise / Among the groves . . .” (125-126). The thoughts that Satan sought to “raise” delay her action, for Eve’s response is not to work, but to weep, and the narrator highlights the moment with formal suspension:

So cheered he his fair Spouse, and she was cheered,

But silently a gentle tear let fall

From either eye, and wiped them with her hair;

Two other precious drops that ready stood,

Each in their crystal sluice, he ere they fell

Kissed as the gracious signs of sweet remorse

And pious awe, that feared to have offended. (5.129-135)

Lines 129-131 present one pattern: Eve’s tears fall down her face, and she uses her hair to dry them. When the pattern of falling tears begins once again in 132, the reader expects the same sequence, but that expectation is interrupted. Before the tears descend, Adam acts to prevent them from coming down at all. Syntactic interruption occurs: the dependent clause “ere they fell” separates the noun, “he,” from its verb, “kissed,” and the enjambment across the line extends the pause between the subject and its action. The grammatical suspension moves the line forward while Adam stops the fall from occurring again. Satan has brought disorder to Eden, and this moment evinces the physical repercussions of Eve’s “distempered” thoughts; yet in this instance, Adam is able to stop the outward signs of Eve’s inward chaos. Adam’s action is ironic, for the moment is pre-lapsarian (“ere they fell”), and it looks ahead to his failure to prevent Eve from eating the fruit. Even further, this tender, nonverbal exchange adumbrates Eve’s distraught tears
upon hearing Adam’s post-lapsarian dismissal of her (10.867-908); there, we see the late effect of Satan’s arrival in the garden in book 4, where Eve weeps, and neither her hair nor Adam can stop her tears from falling. Eve listens “with tears that ceased not flowing, / And tresses all disordered . . .” (10.909-910). Following her plea that Adam not “forsake her,” it is Adam’s words, and not his touch that will “upraise her soon” (10.914, 945).63

Presently-Looming Temptation and Prolonged Narratives

Raphael’s mission is to bring Adam’s attention to the present, and to assist Adam in understanding that his position in the garden—seemingly eternal—is subject to change at any moment. Adam’s self-perception of that role is crucial to avoiding temptation. God informs Raphael that Adam has the potential to obey or disobey: Adam is “‘Left to his own free will’”; “‘his will though free, / [is] Yet mutable’” (5.236-237). Central to God’s mandate is the idea that Adam’s disobedience will alter his relationship to God and destroy Adam’s eternal state of joy in Eden. Adam must see the threat to disobey God will alter his state in time, and that the threat is presently approaching. God instructs Raphael.

‘. . . tell him withal,

His danger, and from whom, what enemy

*Late* fallen himself from heaven, is *plotting now*

63 For a reading of Milton’s “delays” that underscores Adam’s and Eve’s relationship to one another, see Eric Song, who argues for how Milton reworks Virgil’s *Aeneid* in the epic. According to Song, Milton employs a “poetics of delay” to finally show how Adam and Eve will, after the fall, enjoy a union with one another in which their “differences” will remind them of the “redemption to come,” p. 151. Although he notices repetition in Virgil’s epic, Song is more thematically concerned with delays in the narrative than delays in Milton’s formal patterns.
The fall of others from like state of bliss;

By violence, no, for that shall be withstood,

But by deceit and lies; this let him know,

Lest willfully transgressing he pretend

Surprisal, unadmonished, unforewarned.’ (5.238-245, emphasis mine)

God foresees that Adam might not recognize Satanic temptation. The words “plotting now” imply that Satan is not only planning to tempt humankind but also that he is capable of composing a narrative that counters truth. There is the chance that, as a result of Satan’s fictive words, Adam might begin to fashion a narrative in which he professes a lack of warning, the act of “pretend[ing] / Surprisal.” The word “Pretend” is notable here because Milton uses it only two other times in the epic, and both instances associate pretending with Satanic action. To remain steadfast in obedience, both Adam and Eve must realize that succumbing to temptation will affect their self-awareness. This is Raphael’s purpose: that by learning his vulnerable position, Adam might avoid believing a lie about his role in time, and not adopt a false representation of self, as Satan has done. Yet even before the fall, Adam’s subjective experience is at odds with the narrative he hears; two moments of suspension make his subjective experience clear. Because he does not see his condition of obedience is subject to change, he misses the import of Raphael’s warning. While Raphael’s final petition after narrating the War in Heaven is that Adam will “remember, and fear to transgress,” even after hearing the “full relation,” Adam

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64 See the argument to book 3: “and pretending a zealous desire to behold the new Creation and Man whom God had placed there, [Satan] inquires of him the place of his habitation, and is directed; alights first on Mount Niphates” (Fowler 165, my italics).
assumes that he will not disobey God (6.912). Instead, Adam takes for granted that they will not fall. Pleased to have heard the narrative, he says,

‘Great things, and full of wonder in our ears,
Far differing from this world, thou hast revealed
Divine interpreter, by favour sent
Down from the empyrean to forewarn
Us timely of what might else have been our loss,
Unknown, which human knowledge could not reach:
For which to the infinitely good we owe
Immortal thanks, and his admonishment
Receive with solemn purpose to observe
Immutably his sovereign will, the end
Of what we are.’ (7.70-80)

Adam’s conditional wording “might else have been” reveals that he continues to assume his obedience is stronger than it is. In his mind, he will uphold God’s will “immutably” (79), the condition Raphael clearly defines as “not immutable” (5.525). In 5.544-48, Adam’s delight in hearing the narrative outweighs his understanding of the content of the message. Rather than offering him a reason to fear a fall from obedience, Adam shifts the course of the conversation from his present obedience to the almost-impossible-to-answer question of temporality in eternity.

During Raphael’s visit, Adam reads the present as an opportunity to enjoy angelic vocal power rather than seeing it as the “now” of imminent temptation. Following his hasty assumption that they will maintain their obedience, Adam asks a question about
providential temporality. He hopes to learn “‘what cause / Moved the creator in his holy
rest / Through all eternity so late to build / In Chaos, and the work begun, how soon /
Absolved . . .’” (7.90-94). At the heart of Adam’s question is to learn why God created
the world when he did, and what the temporal duration of creation was. Adam longs to
make sense of eternal purposes in human temporal language, instead of thinking further
about the present threat. Both God and Raphael have used the word “now” to emphasize
the urgency of the present: Satan is “plotting now,” and is the one who

‘. . . envies now thy state,

Who is now plotting how he may seduce

Thee also from obedience, that with him

Bereaved of happiness thou mayst partake

His punishment; eternal misery.’ (6.900-904, my italics).

The repetition of “now” emphasizes that a momentary lapse in judgment can have
everlasting consequences. God offers Adam the chance to recognize the impending
deception, yet Adam petitions that Raphael prolong his narration because Adam is lost in
the beauty of angelic vocal power.

Adam’s petition for Raphael to continue contains pre-lapsarian suspended
language. Caught up in convincing Raphael to stay, Adam represents his response to
angelic eloquence figuratively:

‘And the great light of day yet wants to run

Much of his race though steep, suspense in heaven

Held by thy voice, thy potent voice he hears,

And longer will delay to hear thee tell
His generation, and the rising birth

Of nature from the unapparent deep:’ (7.98-103)

He communicates his longing to know the story of creation like a poet, depicting markers of diurnal time, the sun and moon, as if they are pausing in anticipation to listen to the creation narrative. When Adam first glimpses Raphael in the garden, the angel appears like an interruption to Eden’s diurnal cycles: he “seems another morn / Ris’n on mid-noon” who “perhaps” brings “some great behest from Heaven” (5.310-12). Raphael seems to extend Adam’s sense of time as he descends; seeing the messenger opens up new possibilities of temporality and knowledge. Adam hopes that now, Raphael will suspend his return to heaven to instruct him. Enjambment in line 99 inserts a pause between the description of “suspense in heaven” and the cause of the potential delay, Raphael’s voice. The noun “voice” first appears as a prepositional phrase, yet when the word is repeated in the same line, “voice” is the object of a verb that comes before the subject and verb. When the colon appears in line 103, it creates anticipation, as we expect to read more about the sun’s generation. Yet line 104 introduces another possibility when Adam uses a conditional statement:

‘Or if the star of evening and the moon
Haste to thy audience, night with her will bring
Silence, and sleep listening to thee will watch,
Or we can bid his absence, till thy song
End, and dismiss thee ere the morning shine.’ (7.104-108)

Adam’s depiction of the star and moon suggest the way that Raphael’s narration creates anticipation in him to listen. The enjambment that follows the conditional words like
lines 98-104 to stall the forward movement. By including the word “Silence” followed by a comma, Milton places a pause at the opening of line 106 that resists the forward movement of the enjambment. The noun “song” is in a “till” clause, and enjambment separates it from its verb, “end,” where another pause is placed after the comma following “end.” The word “end” is a monosyllable followed by a pause, which creates a temporary rest before the end of the line. This line acknowledges that an “End” will come, yet it seeks to make the present moment last. Adam now imagines diurnal time and daily rhythms of work and rest as flexible; in this moment, listening is more important than the thought of sleeping or arising to work the next day (5.20-25).

Suspensions and synchronicity in books 1-7 of Paradise Lost highlight individuals as they seek to make sense of their temporal constructs. For Satan, the future is open to possibilities; suspension makes clear to us that he is mistaken. The narrator longs to change the past, and sees it for what it could have been, but cannot be. Pre-lapsarian Adam and Eve dwell in a landscape without linear time; Milton depicts the peace of diurnal rhythms in Paradise, where they enjoy harmony with one another, with Raphael as he visits, and with God. Milton’s use of verbal patterns before humankind’s fall helps us to understand the negative impact Satan will have on their lives. Eve weeps as the result of her dream, yet Adam is able to comfort her; still, her sadness foreshadows their shared sense of loss after the fall occurs. The examples we explored reflect the small changes wrought on Eden once Satan appears. As we near the event of the fall in the poem, Satan begins to impact Adam and Eve’s relationship with one another, as we shall see even more explicitly in books 7 and 9, which I turn to in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, AND WHAT MIGHT BE:

POSITING FICTIONS AND FINDING PROVIDENCE IN *PARADISE*

*LOST 7-12*

In the previous chapter, we explored the extent to which Satan’s pause in Chaos anticipates fallen time. When we encounter similar suspensions in Adam’s negations, the narrator’s might-yet-cannot-be longings, and Eve’s not-yet-fallen expressions of fear, we see Milton negotiating between temporalities. Adam’s negations cause us to question whether Adam’s perfect state is indeed perfect, since he overvalues the medium of truth, Raphael’s voice, rather than his message. Book 4’s opening illustrates that although the narrator wishes he might stop the course of fallen history, his suspensions evince his limited power to do so, since the fall has already occurred; at the same time, his allusion to the apocalypse looks ahead to God’s providential power, which implies that he also possesses providential insight. Eve is most directly impacted by Satan’s wiles. Her response, to weep and feel fear, suggests that Satan’s fallen consciousness has disrupted her peaceful state, even as she dwells in Eden’s diurnal rhythms of concord. These verbal patterns stress Adam’s and Eve’s falling and fallen sensibilities, so that we too can work out these temporal categories and our place in time.

As we approach the fall of humankind in book 9, we continue to see Satan’s influence on Eden. Specifically, in this chapter, I will suggest that Satan’s presence in the
garden foreshadows Adam’s and Eve’s shifting perceptions of the garden and their roles with one another. Once the fall occurs, Adam and Eve speak to one another using the negations, hypotheticals, and conditionals that have characterized Satan’s point of view: their suspensions convey their shortsighted view of their choices. Because their perspectives are focused on historical, fallen time, they need a new vantage point from which they can consider God’s providence. After examining Adam and Eve’s language, I will turn to Adam’s conversations with Michael in books 11-12 to show how Milton employs synchronicity to represent the power of providence. Milton’s verbal patterns in these final books attest to Michael’s ability to lead Adam from his fallen mindset to a more comprehensive standpoint. Despite Adam’s fallen condition, he, Eve, and his progeny can experience a new awareness of providence that empowers a right use of both the imagination and the will.

Before moving ahead to Adam’s and Eve’s pre-lapsarian suspensions, I would like to examine a key moment that suspends God’s foreknowledge of the fall. In it, we learn what would have happened if Adam and Eve had remained obedient. Early in book 7, Raphael paves the way for Adam’s understanding of providence. Because this moment adumbrates God’s good wishes for humankind, it prepares us to learn of his providence that Milton especially emphasizes in books 11-12. Preceding the creation narrative, God clothes past, future, and eternity in hypothetical phrases:

‘But lest his [Satan’s] heart exalt him in the harm
Already done, to have dispeopled heaven
My damage fondly deemed, I can repair
That detriment, if such it be to lose
Self-lost, and in a moment will create
Another world, out of one man a race
Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
Not here, *till by degrees of merit raised*
They open to themselves at length the way
Up hither, under long obedience tried,
And earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth,
One kingdom, joy and union without end.’ (7.150-161, emphasis mine)\(^65\)

This idea helps us to understand God’s anticipated end for humankind would have been benevolent, even if the fall had not occurred. God opens up the possibility for humans to ascend to heaven as a result of their obedience. God describes this scenario, which corresponds to the gradual ascent that Raphael posits in 5.493-503, as if it will happen. This passage communicates that God did not preordain humankind’s sin; rather, he had a possibility available for humans *if* they had continued in obedience. Obedience is key for individuals to attain to this union with God in heaven. God’s “until” and “if” clauses signal His omniscient frame of reference and the harmony possible between him and them, even though this possibility will not be available to Adam and Eve after the fall.\(^66\)

Wolfe maintains that hypotheticals in both God and Raphael’s words indicate the

\(^{65}\) The passage also recalls a moment in book 1 that depicts Satanic power. There, the fallen angels arise in response to Satan’s voice: “Yet to their generals voice they soon obeyed / Innumerable” (1.337-38). While Satan can awaken his crew from sleep with his voice, God will create a “race / Of men innumerable” with his words.

\(^{66}\) Wolfe argues that Milton’s “if” and “until” clauses point to his indebtedness to Homer: “But Milton also minimizes the difficulty of translating divine omnipresence into the sequential temporal chain of past, present, and future through recourse to conditional and subjunctive clauses (particularly ‘if’ and ‘until’) that grow out of a Homeric grammar of contingency,” p. 358.
difference between divine and human time. “God’s ‘if’ reflects his effort to accommodate
divine to human temporality: although divine knowledge exists in eternity, mortals
imagine a future that is at once contingent and unknown, thus explaining why both God
and Raphael explain their most crucial theological precepts (“if they will hear” their
umpire conscience, “if not depraved from good”) in hypothetical form” (358). Indeed, the
passage in 7.150-61 conveys a significant con
cept, which Raphael transmits: that God
would have made a “way” for humans to be with him had the fall not occurred. God’s
plan testifies to his desire for the good of humankind and for their presence in eternity
with him.

As he narrates what followed Satan’s fall, Raphael quotes God’s point of view on
humans’ purpose in time, in which God brings eternity, providence, and history together.
From God’s vantage point, He sees the divine plan for humans in history from Satan’s
fall to the end of time. God questions the Satanic perspective by using the hypotheticals
“if” and “till.” Defining Satan’s fall as a “detriment,” God’s hypothetical clause, “if such
it be to lose / Self-lost,” offers a reading that inverts the Satanic perspective, that God is
responsible for the fall of the angels.67 While in some moments of suspension, Milton
places a hypothetical in an enjambed line, here, the hypothetical “if” re-evaluates Satan
and his crew’s perspective: Satan and the fallen angels are already damned because of
their decision to rebel. In this reading, God is not to blame for the angels’ fall. God
describes what happened in the past, Satan’s rebellion, before identifying his future
action, creation, and humans’ endpoint (whether obey or fall), an eternity with God.
When God mentions creation in line 157, the negation “not here” and hypothetical “till”-

67 See 1.642, for example, where Satan says that God’s concealed strength “tempted our
attempt, and wrought our fall.”
clause reveal providence’s power over history, and humans’ participation in a providential plan. The “not here” introduces a category, location, that intersects with time to contrast the physicality of Adam’s position in space with the realm of eternity. Human and divine perceptions of time confirm the fundamental difference between divine and human conditions, and yet humans will join God in heaven. While God creates “in a moment,” the people he will form will not join him in heaven “till by degrees of merit raised / They open to themselves at length the way / Up hither” (7.157-159). Milton’s God uses a chiasmus, “earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth,” to anticipate the end of human history, in which individuals will experience a perfect relationship with God, despite the difference between God and humans. The chiasmus also underscores the Son’s necessary exchange; “heaven” interchanges with “earth” in the second part of the statement, just as the Son will take the place of humankind to secure their redemption (160).

If God can bridge together multiple categories of time, including eternity and history, Adam’s human perspective on time is narrow. For God, creation is quickly accomplished in eternity; for humans, it will take some time, as well as a new covenant, before they will be able to join God in the new heavens and earth. Adam and Eve will need to walk in salvation through faith, since perfect obedience is no longer available to them. From a post-lapsarian perspective, eternity with God can only be achieved after humans die. Raphael refers to time with phrases such as “at length” and “under long obedience tried,” in order to answer Adam’s question, “how soon / [was creation] absolved,” so that Adam might see his very question about hourly time during divine creation is one that betrays his human point of view (7.93-94). While Adam anticipates
the factual answer to the question, Raphael hopes to help him recognize the value in these questions about divine temporality and eternity: these questions imply that Adam is different from God. While God’s work is complete, God’s work in man will remain incomplete until after the apocalypse. In the end, Raphael hopes that Adam will understand his personal, linear history—his lifespan—as a purposeful pause that anticipates eternity. Central to Raphael’s message is the condition of obedience (“under long obedience tried”), but what Adam cannot yet see is his potential to disobey. The word “long” suggests that Adam should recognize the significance of his present condition, obedience, just as it implies the mutability of that condition. It is “long” so that their obedience can be tested against its change.

If he regards his present condition with more care, Adam will learn to recognize what is most worthy of arresting his attention. Raphael uses synchronicity to model a suitable kind of response to divine power over eternity, history, and the apocalypse.

God’s completion of creation initiates angels’ praise, which the cosmos echoes:

‘. . . Up he rode

Followed with acclamation and the sound

Symphonious of ten thousand harps that tuned

Angelic harmonies: the earth, the air

Resounded (thou rememberst, for thou heardst),

The heavens and all the constellations rung,

The planets in their stations listening stood,

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68 The clause “if such it be to lose / Self-lost” places the responsibility of the angelic fall on Satan and his crew; while the angels’ loss is eternal, Adam’s obedience is portrayed in “degrees.”
While the bright pomp ascended jubilant.’ (7.557-564)

Like the passage in 4.598-609, wherein the animals, moon, night, and silence are in accord with one another, these lines exemplify synchronicity. With silence or song, each part of creation magnifies God’s handiwork; angels, Adam, stars, and planets alike participate in awe. Although the first four lines are enjambed, and a colon appears in line 560, there is no action that surprises us. After the colon, the elements of earth and air echo the concordant music in heaven. Even further, the parenthetical interruption serves to close the distance between Adam and the narrative he hears. Raphael encourages him to remember listening to the angelic voices from afar. This kind of glorious sound is familiar to Adam; it is a specific response to the most majestic story, enacted by the most majestic being, God, who speaks the world and human life into existence. Schwartz finds that this passage underscores retrospect so that Adam might participate in creating, as God does: “Creation is reenacted for Adam in three senses: by the music he once heard, by the present narration of Raphael, and by the memory of the song . . . To hear the music of the spheres is to remember the creation, to recall contingency, to pay back in gratitude, and to recreate” (79). Even more than Raphael urges Adam to remember, Raphael is calling Adam to hold fast to a mindset of worship. This moment points forward, too, to after the fall, because Adam won’t be able to maintain this vision. Schwartz goes on to say that “For Milton, a universe conceived in song is one which . . . binds up any discordant threat to its destruction,” but Adam and Eve won’t be able to stop the threat (79). Before the fall, Adam takes part in the glory of heaven as an auditor, and we wish it could be enough to prevent what’s to come. Raphael’s lines reinforce the right kind of wonder: pausing to praise what is worthy—divine power. The description of the planets’
posture—they “stood”—recalls Adam’s description of the evening star and moon that await Raphael’s story with a silent wonder. Raphael hopes to refocus Adam’s admiration of angelic vocal power: God’s handiwork is first and foremost worthy of his awe. After the fall, Adam will need an understanding of God’s providence in order to properly imagine the actions he hopes to take, and a vision of eternity will reflect his ability to live his life with providence in mind.

Raphael suggests that Adam’s response to Raphael’s narration is the type of response that should be reserved for God’s power, and as the angels’ song will reiterate, Adam’s purpose in time is to uphold his relationship with God. Unlike Satan, who uses the “if . . . but” construction, the angels employ an “if . . . and” syntax:

‘. . . Thrice happy men,
And sons of men, whom God hath thus advanced,
Created in his image, there to dwell
And worship him, and in reward to rule
Over his works, on earth, in sea, or air,
And multiply a race of worshippers
Holy and just: thrice happy if they know
Their happiness, and persevere upright.’ (7.625-632)

The angels’ song introduces a pattern that is repeated. While both instances of “thrice happy men” (625, 631) represent Adam’s condition, the use of a colon creates a pause before the second instance. Here, the colon’s pause emphasizes the new pattern of the repeated phrase, in which a hypothetical interrupts the completion of the construction. The enjambed line adds another pause, where the end of the line separates the verb
“know” from its object, “happiness.” Just as Raphael delivers central tenets in hypothetical terms, here, the angels employ a hypothetical accompanied by a brief pause. In lines 631-32, suspension conveys the precarious position of human obedience, and suspension contrasts the harmony between God and man in lines 625-31. Suspension further dramatizes Adam’s position of obedience: the syntax separates Adam’s perfect state of happiness from the condition on which it rests. Satan’s “if . . . but” construction speaks to his negation of the future (Grossman 132-33); in contrast, the angels’ “if . . . and” marks Adam’s necessary present stance in which he must both recognize the potential to fall and actively maintain his obedience.

The instances of hypothetical language in book 7 portray how Adam should view his future and perceive God’s power. What is most worthy of Adam’s attention is God’s power over all creation, and he must understand his human potential to continue in obedience. One final example in Book 7 illustrates one cannot fully know God’s strength. Near the Book’s final lines, the angels’ song underlines divine omnipotence: “Great are thy works, Jehovah, infinite / Thy power; what thought can measure thee or tongue / Relate thee” (7.602-607, emphasis added). Neither angelic nor human expression can fully ascertain God’s magnitude. The clauses beginning with “great” and “infinite” are parallel, since both begin with an adjective that modifies a noun; the clauses link divine actions with His might, which is limitless. The angels know what Adam has not yet realized, and his question at the beginning of book 7, “how soon / [was creation] absolved,” signals his difference from God. Raphael implies that where Adam seeks to quantify, he must instead stand in awe.
Hypotheticals and moments of synchronicity in Raphael’s narration underline the significance of beholding divine power and, in response, participating in worship. Recognition of divine omnipotence and omniscience precedes praise, the outward representation of an inward harmony with God. Raphael provides examples to illuminate the type of response Adam should have, instead of becoming distracted by the beauty of angelic voice. One additional moment of synchronicity in Book 7 portrays harmony between God and the cosmos as an example of rest: “‘So sung they, and the empyrean rung, / With alleluiahs: thus was sabbath kept’” (7.633-34). The narrator briefly conveys how a stop in time occurs that does not interrupt action or signify fallen confusion. Heavenly interims, devoid of noise or chaos, indicate divine omniscience, worthy of reverence and awe.

**Suspension in Conversation: Book 9’s Pre- and Post-Lapsarian Language**

Even before they fall, Adam and Eve both fear possibilities that might take place but have not yet happened. As they converse, they disagree on what they should fear, and hesitate when they think about what might be. Hypotheticals and conditional words that speak to their fears recall Satan’s point of view: his perception of the future involves an inaccurate point of view. He imagines that he might counter God’s power and position, often only to remember the futility of his thoughts. Although Adam and Eve exhibit no other signs of fallen consciousness, if Satan’s intention is to impact Eve’s perception of her role, as he has done while she sleeps, his presence also foreshadows formal suspension in the pair’s

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69 For an extended analysis of the significance of praising God in *Paradise Lost*, see Schwartz’s chapter, “‘Remember and tell over’: Creation in Sacred Song,” pp. 60-90.
conversation. Preceding their disobedience, Adam and Eve do not experience the same kind of harmony in their interactions that readers have previously seen in Book 4. Their relationship with God has not yet been broken; still, in their conversations with each other, they turn to “if” clauses as they imagine potential scenarios. Examining Adam and Eve’s pre-lapsarian suspended language reveals they have a less-than-accurate understanding of their role in the “now” of Eden.

Adam and Eve experience a shift in their perceptions before the fall that is akin to what occurs during Eve’s temptation. While Harold Toliver asserts that Eve’s intention to set out alone signals that “she wants either Adam’s undivided attention or a career of her own,” he displays how the temptation scene marks her shift in perception, rather than looking at earlier moments in book 9 (433). It is Satan’s redefinition of death that enables Eve’s own new framing of her experience and role:

Satan easily converts death into rebirth as a transformation in keeping with the fluidity of the apparently causeless scheme of things he has subtly suggested . . . such a change . . . makes possible a flexible rereading of all Eve’s surroundings, as Satan begins to put together before her eyes an Eden that contains . . . amazing secrets and the powers of revelation. The dynamism of a mere apple illustrates the narrative potential of all those confined things that await the release of their

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70 See the moment where Satan whispers in Eve’s ear, lines 4.799-809.
71 Adam refers to Eve as his “‘Sole partner and sole part of all these joys, / Dearer thyself than all,’” 4.411-12. Eve feels that when they talk with one another, she does not think about diurnal time, because of their mutual enjoyment in conversation, 4.639-40. Once in their bower, their actions are in unison: “both stood / Both turned, and under open sky adored / The God that made both sky, air, earth and heaven / Which they beheld,” 4.720-723. Milton uses one verb to describe their joint actions, as they stand, turn, and see the glory of God in the night sky.
forward urge; they have a poetry far in excess of *expectations*. (Toliver 444, my italics)

For Toliver, Satan exchanges real meanings for inaccurate possibilities that stir Eve’s imagination, thereby causing her to envision what might be. Crucially, Satan provides a narrative that needs a subject: “the story can find its climax only in her act” (Toliver 444). My reading of Adam and Eve’s conversation follows this line of thinking, but I would suggest that we already see traces of Satan’s influence on Eve earlier than the temptation scene, during Eve’s conversation with Adam. Once Satan enters the garden, we will see both Adam and Eve rereading their roles, and Eve will create expectations that Adam does not quite correctly perceive.

Eve is the first to notice what, from her perspective, is an overabundance of growth in Eden, and in one passage, diurnal and subjective time overlap as she uses hypothetical terms and “till” clauses to express her fears. She anticipates that “‘till more hands / Aid’” them, the garden will appear “‘overgrown . . . / Tending to wild’” (9.207-8, 210-212). Before revealing her potential solution to this non-problem (that they go at it alone), she requests a quick answer from Adam: “‘Thou therefore *now* advise / Or hear what to my mind first thoughts present’” (212-13, emphasis added). Eve asks for a response “now,” thereby hinting that her point of view is “first” in her thoughts. In part, the line could read “my mind first,” until one sees the word “thoughts.” To have one’s point of view front and center without connecting it to divine power is a feature of the

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72 John Leonard has recently pointed out that “Whereas the ‘good characters use the word ‘fruit,’ not apple . . . [and] ‘Fruit’ includes consequences . . . Satan alone speaks of ‘apples’” in the epic” (87). In this sense, Satan is redefining what God has made using his own terms. Leonard describes, “Satan relishes the thought of inflicting great harm by small means” (86).
fallen mindset. Eve’s direct references to diurnal time imply that, to some extent, she wants to direct their daily schedule (she proposes she will work alone “till noon”). “‘Till more hands / Aid us’” is a reference to the future, and it also foreshadows linear time, for children will happen after the fall. She imagines that working together is the problem:

‘For while so near each other thus all day
Our task we choose, what wonder if so near
Looks intervene and smiles, or object new
Casual discourse draw on, which *intermits*
Our day’s work brought to little, though begun

Early, and the hour of supper comes uneared.’ (9.220-225, emphasis added)

A colon in line 219, after “noon,” precedes this portion of the sentence, and enjambment occurs throughout. Eve imagines “if,” but the clause is not completed until the next line—occasionally, they might stop working for a few moments to look at each other. She considers that looks and smiles might “intervene” or come between their fruitful labor. In lines 222-23, she fears the distraction of an “object new,” and the types of conversation that interrupt their work. The enjambment between 223 and 224, “‘which intermits / Our day’s work brought to little,’” separates the verb from its object. Eve’s hypothetical “if” evinces what she perceives: such delays would lessen their productivity. What she is anxious to avoid—conversation that stalls their work’s progress—has not happened yet, but she uses the present tense, “*intermits,*” as if these distractions have already taken place. From Eve’s point of view, the time they spend working should involve no delays. Even though God has not stipulated how much work they should accomplish, Eve
pictures certain standards where there are none. She has already imagined interruptions to their work inconsistent with the reality of their situation.

Eve introduces a possibility, so she asserts what they ought to do, and Adam responds in turn from his point of view. Mirroring her wording, he uses a “till” clause and a hypothetical:

‘These paths and bowers doubt not but our joint hands
Will keep from wilderness with ease, as wide
As we need walk, till younger hands ere long
Assist us: but if much converse perhaps
Thee satiate, to short absence I could yield.’ (9.244-48, emphasis added)

The first three lines are enjambed. The noun “hands” is separated from its verb, “will keep,” which casts a shadow on Adam’s certain, future-tense verbs. The lines betray that their hands, like their perspectives, are not quite “joint,” as Adam thinks. Just as he assesses their relationship, he assesses the walkways as “wide” as they need, for now, and joins the future that he imagines with their present moment: the paths are “‘As wide / As we need walk / till younger hands ere long / Assist us,’” and there he briefly stops. Adam thinks about his expectations for the future—the children they will have—which he refers to in the “till” clause. In Eden’s (and Adam’s) perfect now, a wider path is not yet necessary.\(^{73}\) Part-way through the sentence, the colon creates a pause between the “till” clause and the “if” clause. Adam expects that as he and Eve work together, they will maintain the correct width of the garden path. Before the pause, he assumes that she means its literal width; after the colon, he reflects on the possibility that Eve might have

\(^{73}\) The “wide” path may foreshadow Sin and Death’s “broad” bridge from chaos to earth, 10.304-305, and the “wide anarchy of chaos” (10.283).
had enough conversation. Since he wants to correct what might be out of balance, he is willing to let her work alone. In this passage, the colon divides two temporalities, linear and subjective time; it inserts a pause between the two clauses of suspension, a pause that foreshadows linear history, beginning with the fall. The “till” clause suggests the perfect plan of God: obedient to Him, Adam and Eve will dwell in Paradise with their progeny. If the “till” clauses signify “the horizon between innocence and sin,” this particular “till” clause is working to show Adam’s unfallen expectations for the future, that they will dwell in the garden with their children (Wolfe 361). On the other side of the colon, the “but if” reverses the “till” clause. As a consequence of Eve’s fears for what might not happen, Adam begins to construct an alternative storyline: Eve might have already spent too much time conversing with him, if there is such a thing. To maintain the harmony between them, he is willing to lose a few hours with her.

Even after expressing the possible reasons for Eve’s request, Adam senses that he may have reason to fear what might happen. Adam voices his concern: “‘But other doubt possesses me, lest harm / Befall thee severed from me’” (9.251-52). A few lines later, he says, “‘somewhere nigh at hand [their foe] / Watches, no doubt, with greedy hope to find / His wish and best advantage, us asunder’” (9.256-58). Wavering between doubt and certainty, Adam thinks he should let her go, but their foe is a real threat. What Adam fails to see is the manner of the threat: he assumes that Satan will either tempt them from obedience or disrupt their relationship with one another (9.261-263). Adam has not yet grasped the connection between obedience to God and their relationship with one another: their harmony with one another parallels their harmonious relationship with God. Adam does not see what the formal suspension in their language reveals: something
is off balance in the garden. While Eve suspects nature might grow too much, Adam surmises Eve might not be happy. Because both of these alternative storylines occur after Satan’s disruption to Eden’s perfect state, it causes readers to question if his presence in the garden plays a role in Adam’s and Eve’s perceptions here. In Eve’s dream, Satan has upraised “Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires / Blown up with high conceits engend’ring pride” (4.808-809), and she experiences these aspirations as a literal flight: a movement that leads her to a newfound perception of the world. Eve recounts, “‘Forthwith up to the clouds / With him I flew,’” and her higher vantage point empowers her to view the earth as “‘immense, a prospect wide / And various’” (5.86-89). Viewing the world from afar prompts Eve to broaden her vision of the world and her role in it. After seeing the earth from a wider perspective, she proposes an alternative to being “‘so near’” to Adam during the day, a description she uses twice (9.220-21). She discovers the earth to be “‘various,’” and proposes options to Adam: she says that he can work “where choice” leads him, while she moves “‘yonder’” towards the roses (9.214, 218-19). It would seem that the dream precedes her need to distance herself—not necessarily to

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74 Insofar as Satan lifts Eve to new heights in her dream, his action might be contrasted with the narrator, who “encourages us through his musical poetry to join him in his ‘adventurous Song, / That with no middle flight intends to soar / Above th’ Aonian Mount,” as Charalampous comments. She continues, “This sublime flight and arguably hubristic sense of prophetic mission is intended to recreate harmony and a life without sin, however fleeting this experience may be,” p. 150.

75 Katherine Eggert underlines the significance of these lines, which signify the possibilities open to Adam and Eve with “providence” as their guide: “Neither ‘staying’ nor ‘straying’ will lead one, quest-like, to the foreordained end of revelation. Rather, each leads to the kind of unlimited, laterally spread perspective that . . . appeals to Eve in her dream: ‘The Earth outstretcht immense, a prospect wide / And various’ . . . This is the wide prospect into which Adam and Eve venture at the end of the poem, with the enjambment of the closing lines emphasizing it as an open vista of infinite choice . . . in the form of . . . ‘Providence,’” p. 199.
move away from Adam, but to move towards the independence that a larger vantage point makes possible.

Leading up to the fall, formal suspension reveals Adam and Eve’s subjective fears that may or may not materialize; after the fall, suspension highlights the human subjective experience of temporality, now disjoined from providence. The first mention of Adam after the fall disrupts our expectations. The description of his action begins mid-line and is enjambed: “Adam the while / Waiting desirous for her return, Had wove / Of choicest flowers a garland . . .” (9.838-40). The word “waiting” does not fulfill what we anticipate. Rather than disclosing what Adam has done that morning (we have a specific account of Eve’s activities), the lines emphasize what Adam has most recently done. Perhaps Adam has pruned the garden and created adornment for Eve’s hair with the leftover blooms; perhaps he did not work very much at all and wove the garland instead. Either way, his posture is one of active waiting. The formal suspension begins again in line 843, where the passage then shifts to his subjective experience:

Great joy he promised to his thoughts, and new
Solace in her return, so long delayed;
Yet oft his heart, divine of something ill,
Misgave him; he the faltering measure felt;
And forth to meet her went, the way she took
That morn when first they parted; by the tree
Of knowledge he must pass, there he her met,
Scarce from the tree returning; in her hand
A bough of fairest fruit that downy smiled,
New gathered, and ambrosial smell diffused.
To him she hasted, in her face excuse
Came prologue, and apology to prompt,
Which with bland words at will she thus addressed. (9.843-855)
The fall sets into motion a break with cosmological harmony, and the formal suspension in lines 843 through 846 represents this breach at the micro level, inside Adam’s physical frame. The formal suspension shows how a minor anatomical pause, signaling subjective time, is out of synch with providence. In the sentence’s first line, Adam anticipates seeing Eve again, but the word “new” appears at the end of the line, signaling a change. The word “new” recalls 9.222, where Eve fears an “object new” in conversation that would distract them from their work. In this later passage, the enjambment is magnified: line 838 inserts a pause between “new” and “solace.” We are not aware of what will be “new” until after the line ends. While Adam expects comfort once Eve returns, her absence feels wrong—she is “so long delayed”—and a semicolon asks readers to rest again. The formal elements of enjambment and the semicolon dramatize what Adam anticipates; he expected her before now, but she isn’t here. To portray that something is not right, Milton uses the verb “divining” as an adjective: Adam’s heart is “divine of something ill,” a description that sums up the false narrative Eve will offer him. As a consequence of the storyline, both Adam and Eve will become “divine of something ill.” After the semicolon, the “yet” marks a turn from what Adam expects to what happens next. His heart senses something has gone wrong, and he feels it over and over again, “oft.” There is another pause at the end line 846, after phrase, “he the faltering measure felt.” Adam
waits; his heart repeatedly skips a beat as the “measure” falters. The brief pause in his heartbeat adumbrates what he has yet to learn, that she has eaten of the fruit. Just as the measure of his heart falters, the verb “divining” has been cut short to “divine.” The shortened word in the verse (“measure”) parallels the brief gap in the rhythm of his heart. Even further, the word “measure,” a musical term, hearkens back to the “partial” lapse of the fallen angels’ pain in hell (2.552-555). These terms cause Adam’s experience to resonate on a personal level: he perceives the fall at the very core of his being, without knowing what he experiences yet.

Following Eve’s disobedience, formal suspension continues to highlight how Adam’s subjective point of view conflicts with his future ordained by providence. As he decides whether or not to eat the fruit, Adam hypothesizes a future scenario that might occur, and then negates the potential outcome:

Should God create another Eve, and I
Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
Would never from my heart; no no, I feel
The link of nature draw me: flesh of flesh,
Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe. (9.911-916, emphasis added)

Conditional language reoccurs in the first and third lines of the sentence. Adam speculates what God might do, even though he is not certain of it. For a moment, he experiences what such a loss might feel like—he suspects he could not forget this loss, and the syntax serves to mirror Adam’s sense of isolation. Enjambment separates Adam,

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76 Eve’s words “at will” alert us, too, that something has gone wrong; they foreshadow the lack of harmony between the “will” and “understanding” in lines 9.1127-1129.
“I,” from the verb “afford,” and “loss” from the conditional in the next line. The
pronouns “I” and “Thee” hover at the end of the lines, positioned before brief rests and
detached from one another. The sentence stops mid-way, where Adam repeats negations
that heighten the conflict between his love for Eve and obedience to God (9.913). In
effect, Adam nullifies the possibility of a second Eve, a conclusion that leads him to an
even greater commitment to follow her example. He must negotiate between maintaining
harmony with God, obedience, and harmony with Eve, which he defines as part of his
relationship with her. The colon dramatizes his decision to disobey, which he terms as a
natural response, given their relationship with one another. Poised between his pre-
lapsarian and post-lapsarian condition, Adam does finally move forward, uniting himself
with Eve rather than providence, and in doing so, he negates the possibility of what God
would have done if Adam had not disobeyed.

One final example of suspension in Book 9 illustrates the fallen subjectivity of
Adam and Eve’s experience after the fall. The passage details internal discord:

Thus fenced, and as they thought, their shame in part
Covered, but not at rest or ease of mind,
They sat them down to weep, nor only tears
Rained at their eyes, but high winds worse within
Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,
Mistrust, suspicion, discord, and shook sore
Their inward state of mind, calm region once
And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent:
For understanding ruled not, and the will
Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
To sensual appetite, who from beneath
Usurping over sovereign reason claimed
Superior sway: from thus distempered breast,
Adam, estranged in look and altered stile,
Speech intermitted thus to Eve renewed. (9.1119-1133, emphasis mine)

This portrayal amplifies the type of discord Adam feels when his heartbeat stops only for a moment. The passage includes a negation in line 1121, followed by a “but” in the next line, and 4 enjambed lines. The first negation, “now tossed,” attests to a lack of peace, and verbs such as “rained” and “rise” portray the chaos in their bodies (9.1120, 1122-23). Even worse, the turmoil they experience alters their mental perceptions: their tears not only manifest their external sorrow but also signal internal storms of strife, now their enjoined “state” (9.915). The enjambed lines list the internal qualities that separate them from peace. After the colon, Milton personifies the will, which no longer listens to “understanding.” “Understanding” and “will” were once in harmony with one another, but now, they no longer listen to each other—the will “heard not her lore” (9.1128).

Importantly, this moment foreshadows the sensory implications of the fall: because of their broken union with God, they can no longer hear or see as they did before. The fall impacts Adam and Eve’s internal harmony as well as their auditory abilities in the form of the personification of “will”: knowledge and choice are at odds with one another. Further, the simple past tense indicates that the impact on their senses is irreversible. Line 1131’s colon pauses the passage again before giving us a glimpse into Adam’s fallen point of view before he speaks. Line 1132 includes a subject, “Adam,” which is separated
from the verb, “renewed”: his very action interrupts those chaotic forces that sin stirs up. The passage goes to show how the fall jars natural rhythms in their conversation.

The verbs “intermitted” and “renewed,” which suggest that Adam will interrupt this moment with his words, reveal that after the fall, humankind fails to find peace, just as Satan cannot experience rest. Further, this word “renewed” recalls the crucial moment in book 3 that precedes the Son’s volunteering of himself to die for humankind. Before the Son volunteers, the description of his action contains a “had not” in which the Son “renewed” his speech to offer up his life (3.224-26). When Wolfe underlines the value of Homeric contrafactuals in *Paradise Lost*, she calls this “had not” the “pivotal contrafactual moment” in the entire epic (319): “As the theological climax of the poem, the narrator’s ‘had not’—a phrase that closely approximates Homer’s ‘καί νῦν . . . εἰμέ’—captures the utter and miraculous contingency of divine grace, powerfully affirming the decisive power of the Son’s free choice to intercede” (319).

The contrary to fact statement “had not” highlights the Son’s willingness to die, an act that will be the midpoint in linear history between the fall and the apocalypse, and that makes a “renewed” harmony with God possible for humankind. Indeed, as Wolfe continues, she illuminates the Son’s purpose, which is to terminate the chaos caused by the fall: the Son is “motivated by the ‘fullness’ of his love for humankind but also by his wish to ‘end the strife / Of mercy and justice’ (3.406-7)” (319). The Son will restore peace between God and man, and stop humans’ internal strife, the kind described in detail in 9.1119-1133. In contrast to the Son, who conquers strife when he renews his speech, after Adam renews his words in line 9.1133, he will communicate the futility of fallen speech. Adam reproaches Eve by saying, “‘Would thou hadst hearkened to my words / . .
. we had then / Remained still happy, not as now, despoiled / Of all our good, shamed, naked, miserable” (9.1134, 1137-1139). “We had then / remained” bespeaks a crucial misperception, that remembering what might have been could do any good at this point. Adam enlists a contrary-to-fact response to convey Eve’s responsibility, and similarly, Eve’s response employs contrary-to-fact language to question the accuracy of his reasoning:

‘ . . . who knows
But might as ill have happened thou being by,
Or to thyself perhaps: hadst thou been there,
Or here the attempt, thou couldst not have discerned
Fraud in the serpent, speaking as he spake.’ (9.1146-1150, emphasis mine)

When Wolfe defines the importance of counterfactuals, she says they “work to foster narrative suspense and theological contingency as well as to dramatize the mysteriousness of divine grace” (317). Even more specifically, post-lapsarian contrafactuals spoken by Adam and Eve highlight the consequences of sin that renders their retrospect as noise, rather than conversation. These post-lapsarian contrary to fact moments show the discord between Adam and Eve that illustrates their fallen consciousness. Adam and Eve fail to hear the content of what the other is saying, and as a result, they echo the blame back and forth.

Because Adam and Eve create noise, rather than conversation, Milton portrays their fallen state as similar to Satan’s condition in Chaos, where he hears discord. He hesitates, and in frame of mind that counters God, hears commotion:
Nor was his ear less pealed
With noises loud and ruinous (to compare
Great things with small) then when Bellona storms,
With all her battering engines bent to raze
Some capital city; or less then if this frame
Of heaven were falling, and these elements
In mutiny had from her axle torn
The steadfast earth. (2.920-927)

Satan hears the noises in realm of Chaos as if he is hearing the sounds of war, which mirror his personal intent to wreak destruction on God’s creation. In this moment that foreshadows the chaos he will initiate, Adam and Eve’s fall, the sounds presage the earth’s response to broken harmony with God. The hypothetical if-statement in 2.994-98 envisions a cosmic uproar, the product of Satan’s present step forward, and man’s future downfall. Like the cosmos, which will be “torn” from peace with God, Adam and Eve each acutely experience the consequences of sin—anger, hatred, discord, and the like—as they suffer from their torn relationship with God (9.1119-1133). Here, Satan hears the kinds of sounds that would threaten a razed city, while Adam and Eve feel “winds” of strife “rise” internally, a testament to their fallen nature. They sit down on the ground: “they sat them down to weep” (9.1121) without feeling any remission. After Eve parts from Adam, she departs from obedience; Adam also departs, and is torn from “steadfast” love for God. Perhaps this sound Satan hears foreshadows the “sighing” (9.783) of the earth, the “second groan” after Adam eats of the fruit, and thunder of sadness, likened to rain and rising winds (9.1001). Satan’s perception is the product of his fallen imagination.
In book 9, Eve also re-constructs her once-perfect condition in the garden with a viewpoint that underscores her agency. She asks, “‘Was I to have never parted from thy side? / As good have grown there still a lifeless rib’” (9.1153). Eve uses negation to propose a contrafactual in which she imagines never having been created to begin with. She sees the freedom to stand on her own as an essential part of her identity.

The post-lapsarian formal suspensions in book 9 reveal the frustrated anticipation inherent in fallen subjectivity, which is explicitly realized in Adam and Eve’s post-lapsarian dialogue. Adam and Eve use conditional wording to look back on the sin they have already committed without recognizing the pointlessness of their conversation. While they echo each other’s fallen subjectivity—both unwilling to take the blame—their conversation slowly moves nowhere. Their dialogue represents a retrospective and subjective account of what might have been, and as such, it portrays their need for an awareness of providence’s power over time. Aply, the book ends with the words “no end,” which the later words “ended, and” will counter—words interspersed in Michael’s later conversations with Adam, as well as in the narrator’s own rendering of God’s point of view on time in book 11.77

Although Adam and Eve sense time’s slow crawl—their subjective experience of temporality—up close, the narrator will later exemplify how a subjective perspective can incorporate providence and linear history from a distance. In book 11, the narrator uses suspended language to bring together providence, linear time, and his point of view as a poet. Before the suspension occurs, God explains the purpose of death, which is man’s “final remedy.” After it, man will arrive “‘to second Life, / Waked in the renovation of

77 See the following lines, where the word “and” follows “end”: 12.6, 12.552, 12.606.
the just . . . / with heav’n and earth renewed’” (11.62, 64-66). Death prevents man from experiencing a sinful existence forever, but his faith and works will usher him in to a joy-filled life in eternity with God. A moment of formal suspension follows:

He ended, and the son gave signal high
To the bright minister that watched, he blew
His trumpet, heard in Oreb since perhaps
When God descended, and perhaps once more
To sound at general doom. (11.72-76)

“This is not just the sound of a trumpet,” the narrator steps aside to say. It is a note that might blast on Mount Sinai, and it could even summon souls during the apocalypse. The verb “heard” makes the reader anticipate the sound in heaven. Surprisingly, the subsequent prepositional phrase truncates that expectation: “heard in Oreb since perhaps / When God descended . . .” (74-75). The past tense “heard” refers to a moment in historical time before the narrator’s history, but “perhaps” is ambiguous—the narrator’s point of view is that this sound could have been heard on Sinai.78 These lines echo the opening of the poem, where the narrator invokes the muse, who “on the secret top / Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire / that Shepheard” (1.16-8). Insofar as these lines look back to the beginning of the epic, they signal a kind of closure for the poem as a artifact. The narrator references the past as future—the word “since” reads as “since then,” or after the

78 For Wolfe’s comments on the word “perhaps,” see page 362: “When fallen characters speak in the conditional and hypothetical modes of ‘if,’ ‘until,’ and ‘perhaps,’ they show themselves unaware of the extent to which their liberty has been extirpated by sin, no longer capable of perceiving the limits of contingency in their fallen state.” Brisman also explores the importance of the word “perhaps” on pp. 169-177, as does Patterson, pp. 196-203, who brilliantly points out the way “perhaps” refers to multiple temporalities in Milton’s depiction of the ant in Paradise Lost, 7.484-89.
trumpet resounds in heaven. Then, the narrator begins the pattern again, using the phrase “perhaps once more,” which is followed by the pause at the end of the line. Finally, the last line looks ahead to the apocalypse, the return of Christ. Hearing the music in heaven, a realm of eternity, the narrator is able to foresee a past and future moment. The narrator envisions what Adam will have in more certainty, heavenly prophecy, yet the narrator is somewhat uncertain. Like Adam, the narrator hasn’t been to Sinai, or to the end of time, and can only speculate as best he can from the present, where he rereads the opening of the epic as part of the past.

**Making all Things New: Suspension and Synchronicity in Books 7, 11, and 12**

During Michael and Adam’s dialogue, Adam employs conditional language and hypotheticals that signal his subjective temporal perspective. As Adam grows to understand the content of Michael’s message, Adam begins to take into account providence’s power over time, and know his own limitations in time. Adam expresses this outlook in his language, wherein he demonstrates an ability to turn from conditional and hypothetical phrasing to future-tense verbs, just as he will shift his temporal perspective from fallen so that he incorporates providence. This shift in his language is crucial. In order for Adam to gain a right awareness of his present and future purpose, Adam must grapple with his fallen point of view on a lifespan’s futility. In books 11 and 12, Adam progresses from imagining impossible realities to gain a realistic perspective on his linear future and what awaits him after death. As Michael completes his task, he assists Adam to come to terms with his subjective experience of the fall’s consequences and to move beyond the limits of his subjectivity. Adam needs a providential perspective
on the fall in order to carry forward an accurate understanding of eternity before he leaves the garden; at the same time, Adam must understand the content of Michael’s angelic mediation without overvaluing the messenger. After the fall, he becomes more attentive to the content of mediation rather than to its medium. The formal suspensions and moments of synchronicity in books 11 and 12 attest to Adam’s change in perspective and the harmony he will once again experience with God.

Once Michael arrives, he delivers the message right away: Adam and Eve can no longer stay in Eden. Hearing Michael’s message fills Adam with dread that fails to note any angelic musicality in Michael’s voice. Adam’s sensory response—“heart-strook with chilling gripe of sorrow stood, / That all his senses bound”—recalls the moment his heart misses a beat (11.263-5). In this instance, not only Adam’s heartbeat but also his sensory faculties briefly cease. The moment contrasts Adam’s awe-struck response to the beauty of Raphael’s voice, after Raphael defines how Adam must “stand” in obedience: “Thy words / Attentive, and with more delighted ear / Divine instructor, I have heard, then when / Cherubic songs by night from neighboring hills / Aerial music send” (5.544-48). There, Adam references the quality of the voice first before he remarks on the content of Raphael’s message. After Michael arrives, Adam is overwhelmed to the point that he cannot speak because he understands the import of the content. Adam once used formal suspension to poetically imagine how the heavens might pause. Now, Adam does not anticipate hearing about the past or imagining the future. His response to the content prevents him from conversing at all, if only for a time.

79 Grossman notices that Adam’s sense of vision is altered, and like Satan’s (163).
Before the fall, Adam’s suspended language illuminates his anticipation; after the fall, Adam lapses into conditional language, for he expects to be disappointed. In the middle of his response to Michael, Adam hopes for what cannot be:

‘. . . if by prayer

Incessant I could hope to change the will

Of him who all things can, I would not cease

To weary him with my assiduous cries:

But prayer against his absolute decree

No more avails then breath against the wind,

Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth:

Therefore to his great bidding I submit.’ (11.307-313)

Now fallen, he can only anticipate the negation of what might be. The conditional “would not” following the hypothetical expresses Adam’s willingness to ask for God to change His will, and to reiterate that plea, yet he goes on to say his prayers can result in nothing. Like Satan, whose “if . . . but” rhetoric demonstrates that the “future is simply the negation of the past” (Grossman 132-133), Adam fixates on what he longs for, then negates the possibility. Separated from God Adam cannot move beyond the unproductive conditional thinking of fallen subjectivity until he understands his purpose in linear time. Still, Adam’s language shows some progression towards a providential standpoint: he concludes the sentence with a present-tense determination to do what God says (“I submit,”” 313).

Adam’s shifts between conditional wording, future tense, and present tense demonstrate that his perspective on time is beginning to change. He uses future tense to
express his fear that he might not see God once again: “‘In yonder nether world where shall I seek / His bright appearances, or foot step-trace?’” (11.328-29). He describes only seeing God from a distance:

‘For though I fled him angry, yet recalled
To life prolonged and promised race, I now
Gladly behold though but his utmost skirts
Of glory, and far off his steps adore.’ 80 (11.330-333)

Adam takes comfort in what he knows for certain: death will not come yet, and he will have a future progeny. To anticipate seeing God face-to-face again, he must begin to grasp his life’s purpose from God’s point of view, instead of thinking only on his new separation from God. Significantly, this passage marks Adam’s continued focus on content, not sound. The musicality of Raphael’s language once captured his attention; now, he does not mention angelic voice. Rather, he professes adoration for God using the present tense “I now / . . . behold” (11.332). Even if he does not yet fully understand his purpose, he steps forward, resolving to obey, see God’s beauty, and worship in the present—what we did not quite see when Raphael reminded him of the importance of worship.

Although Adam becomes more present-oriented, he has yet to fully understand of God’s providential purpose for his lifespan, as two additional examples of his suspended language make clear. After hearing the catalogue of diseases, Adam questions the purpose of life if death must occur (11.471-493). He proposes, “‘if we knew / What we receive, [we] would either not accept / Life offered, or soon beg to lay it down, / Glad to

80 Here, Adam echoes the “farre off” from Spenser’s Calender. See the envoy, line 11.
be so dismissed in peace’” (11.504-507). Reverting to the conditional, Adam says that were he omniscient, he would choose to die sooner rather than later. As in earlier moments, he continues to overly dwell on measuring—this time, he wishes for a short lifespan dependent upon one’s degree of suffering. From his point of view, life should be either negated or quickly ended. Here, Adam rewrites his story, thereby composing a different ending than the one God has in mind. Fixed on the “race” of man, he will not see God’s purpose in the “race of time” until he understands a providential view of history (11.786, 12.555).

Adam equates death with peace: death would release him from the turbulent chaos of fallen subjectivity.⁸¹ To teach Adam the value of bringing together multiple categories of time, Michael foretells the destruction of the flood, the punishment for sin. Adam replies using both conditional wording and the word “now”:

‘. . . I had hope

When violence was ceased, and war on earth,

All would have then gone well, peace would have crowned

With length of happy days the race of man;

But I was far deceived; for now I see

Peace to corrupt no less then war to waste.

How comes it thus? Unfold, celestial guide,

And whether here the race of man will end.‘

To whom thus Michael. (11.779-787, emphasis added)

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⁸¹ See Grossman, who analyzes an earlier passage from this book: “Fallen Adam initially conceives of death as a literal return to the dust from whence he came, and, consequently, as a relief from strife and toil (XI.547-53)” (172).
Although Adam expects humans to enjoy their lives once war has ceased, with a “but,” he overturns this expectation. Michael’s prophecy equips Adam to turn from the hypothetical to the present: “for now I see . . .” (784). Once Adam reaches the limits of his own understanding, he wonders if the flood marks the end of time, revealing his concern with the parameters of history.

Offering a corrective to Adam’s limited sight, Michael offers a vision of linear history that providence enfolds, a vision that employs synchronicity in both its syntax and message and closes the book. Michael foretells God’s covenant with Noah, a promise that the rainbow signifies:

‘. . . but when he brings
Over the earth a cloud, will therein set
His triple-colored bow, whereon to look
And call to mind his covenant: day and night,
Seed-time and harvest, heat and hoary frost
Shall hold their course, till fire purge all things new,
Both heaven and earth, wherein the just shall dwell.’ (11.895-901)

This moment brings together linear history and providence, diurnal time and providence, and linear history and eternity halfway through Michael’s prophetic revelation. Michael explains how God’s covenant with Noah signals a post-lapsarian balance between providence and the diurnal temporal rhythms that govern the seasons and boundaries of the sea. The language in this moment represents accord between temporal categories. In line 898, a colon pauses the sentence, and after the colon, no action is delayed; instead, Milton lists paired contraries, hot and cold. While enjambment produces a brief pause at
the end of 898, it is a balanced rest followed by two additional pairs of contraries. In line 900, two phrases of five syllables each precede a verb and object, “shall hold their course.” Providence is able to maintain equipoise between opposing forces in nature: diurnal temporality, the seasons, and the weather will continue their rhythms until the end of time. The “till” clause stipulates how long humans can expect God’s promise to last.\(^{82}\) Remarking on this passage, Grossman explains how it reveals Adam’s purpose in linear time, to move towards an eternity with God:

The Christian’s recourse is to place his experience not in the context of personal ends, but in the eternal sphere of providence. In this way the creature aspires to become within history what, in God’s mind, he already is. History is thus the medium in which man writes his name in the ink of his choices and the text that he reads in search of ‘conformity divine.’ Ultimately, through the example of Christ, who exchanges immortality for death, the faithful man learns to exchange death for immortality by positing eternal being as his personal end. This is the message Adam reads in Michael’s historical revelation. (Grossman 181)

The syntax underlines the difference between eternity and other temporal categories. As in other passages, the word “new” lingers at line’s end, but now the word references eternity, in contrast to subjectivity. In short, God’s covenant marks a physical manifestation of his promise to maintain harmony between providence and diurnal time until the apocalypse, and the new heavens and earth. The rainbow aligns past, present, and future, and signifies that humans can behold, remember, and anticipate. The promise looks forward the final moment when those who are “just” will inhabit heaven with God.

\(^{82}\) One might compare this instance of a “till” clause, which other “till” clauses that convey “uncertainty,” such as “‘till one greater man / Restore us’” (Wolfe 361).
Michael brings together past, present, and future, and in doing so, he gives Adam hope; he, too, will be able to do the same.

Formal synchronicity brings together temporal categories; at the end of Book 11, it adds a rest that models peace, not chaos. This rest mirrors post-lapsarian harmony between God, individuals, and the cosmos as providence, diurnal temporality, and history are aligned with one another. This intersection of temporality is a lesson for Adam so that he might move beyond solely subjective thinking to connect his role to a larger narrative, one in which God has power over various categories of time. Although the fall taints Adam’s world, he can anticipate both God’s promise to never again destroy the earth by flood and God’s power over seasonal time, once he widens his temporal perspective so that it incorporates providence. If he expands his awareness, Adam will acquire a newfound sense of purpose: he can look forward to participating in a history that God both limits and defines. This passage stands in contrast to Satanic moments of suspension, when readers see Satan’s perspective on his role in time, which occludes his view of providence. This instance in book 11 is an example of the types of synchronous pauses in the final books of *Paradise Lost* that communicate the opportunity for individuals to experience a renewed harmony between themselves and God.

Similar to the final lines in book 11, book 12 opens with a moment of synchronicity that places temporal categories together. When Michael pauses, subjective and linear time intersect:

As one who in his journey baits at noon,

Though bent on speed, so here the archangel paused

Betwixt the world destroyed and world restored,
If Adam aught perhaps might interpose;

Then with transition sweet new speech resumes. (12.1-5)83

The syntax results in multiple pauses in these lines: enjambment occurs in the second line, a prepositional phrase fills the third line, and a hypothetical statement closes the first part of the sentence. A semicolon adds a stop between the fourth and fifth lines. Still, none of these elements generate anticipation that is interrupted. Instead, the first two lines relay Michael’s balance between two opposing tensions, rest and momentum. Despite his forward inclination to complete God’s work, he stops as one would for a midday meal. Two categories of time intersect: his subjective experience—he stops, even though he feels an urge to move forward—and linear temporality, the “world destroyed and world restored” (3). All of the formal elements work together to specify Michael’s pause as exactly what God has asked him to do. He attends to God’s instructions: to hurry to Eden—to “‘haste’”—and to “‘intermix / My cov’nant in the woman’s seed renewed’” (11.115-116). Michael is to send Adam and Eve from the garden “‘in peace,’” and accordingly, he minds his pace, and waits for Adam’s response (11.117).

Beyond characterizing Michael’s obedience to God’s instructions, these lines underscore the balance between rest and work inherent in Michael’s mission, as well as the suspension between life and death inherent in one’s lifespan. The pause is connected to the divine pattern of rest and work—implicit in God’s Sabbath rest. It is also a paradigm for Adam’s role in linear history. Although Adam will not experience them first-hand, he hears of the incarnation and apocalypse. Like the angel who for a moment, lingers between destruction and restoration, yet is—at the same time—fulfilling his divinely

83 Milton adds these 5 lines to the 1674 edition of the epic. See Miller, 2003, p. 192-3.
appointed purpose, Adam will live his entire life between “the world destroyed and the world restored,” a pause in which he is always awaiting death. Speaking of Adam’s lifespan after the fall, Brisman says, “Existence in time becomes, not the penalty, but the ‘interposed ease’ between necessitated and actualized finitude. Adam’s great option is the option of seeing things thus, and stands as a model for the reader’s great option so to view experience and find the justifications of God’s ways in the adjustments of perspective toward them” (171). Modeling for Adam balanced rest in a post-lapsarian landscape, Michael extends to Adam the opportunity to speak. The hypothetical statement, “if Adam aught perhaps might interpose,” includes three words that speak to his potential for action: “aught,” “perhaps,” and “might.” Because the repetition suggests the possibility that Adam can interrupt, God now provides humans the chance to participate in His narrative. Brisman asserts that once the fall has occurred, “Paradise Lost must reestablish the validity of alternative” (170). This is one such moment where Milton rewrites the potential for human choice. When one exercises his or her free will and rightly considers how the will is connected to God, such an interruption would be welcome.

Since this moment brings together subjectivity and linear time, as well as providence, this moment counters Satan’s pause on the edge of Chaos, in which Satan’s point of view motivates him to move forward, which foreshadows the beginning of fallen time. The final clause in 8.5 calls attention to Michael’s accommodating speech: his speech contains a “transition,” which etymologically combines “across” and “to go” (OED). The word “transition” implies not only Michael’s literal passage from one word to another, and one world to another, but also humans’ step forward from a broken
relationship with God to a new relationship with Him. Paradoxically, it is by resting that Michael extends to Adam the chance to choose. In this way, Michael offers grace to Adam that models the Son’s sacrifice: “these lines are at once a magnified cesura and a miniature Incarnation” (Miller 193). Whereas Satan stood between a place of destruction and of new creation, Michael pauses between destruction and restoration.

Satan’s point of view opposes human harmony with God, and as a result, his actions set in motion the events of historical time. Milton suggests that one’s point of view and historical time can be brought together, even after Adam and Eve sin, when one participates in God’s providential plan. Michael’s rhythms of silence and speech bridge the relational gap between Adam and God, and the temporal gaps between subjectivity and history. Once a person’s point of view takes into account a providential standpoint, subjectivity can be brought together with history, as this moment of synchronicity makes clear. Adam can maintain his subjectivity and gain an accurate picture of his role in linear time, but he still has yet to grapple with how to understand eternity.

This pause recalls and reverses Satan’s on the edge of Chaos, and in addition, it corrects an earlier moment of suspension, in which pre-lapsarian Adam is confronted with a vision of eternity, yet he becomes lost in his subjective response to Raphael’s message. The opening of book 7 provides Adam’s sensory response to hearing the creation narrative:

The angel ended, and in Adam’s ear
So charming left his voice, that he awhile
Thought him still speaking, still stood fixed to hear;
Then as new waked thus gratefully replied. (8.1-4)
Adam has just heard Raphael’s narration of God’s sabbath rest and the song of the heavenly choir. Raphael closes book 7 by saying that if Adam wonders anything else “not surpassing human measure,” Adam is welcome to voice his reply. These lines portray that, for a time, Adam is not able to do so; he perceives Raphael “still speaking,” and thus remains in a state of expectation. The pause in book 8 represents formal suspension; the formal elements work to surprise our expectations. Although the word “ended” marks a close to Raphael’s story, the word “and” is ironic: the sentence moves past the “end” just as Raphael’s voice exceeds the parameters of book 7. The pause between the first two enjambed lines makes Adam’s subjective experience central: he feels as if Raphael’s voice still echoes, even though Raphael is silent. The semicolon stops the reader before the end of the line; then, the line reveals it is Adam who will speak next.

This momentary stop in the narrative demonstrates a pre-lapsarian difficulty in understanding how a human point of view can comprehend eternity. The story of creation communicates the divine harmony within the cosmos. In it, Adam sees first-hand the Sabbath rest of God, a brief rest in eternity, and thereby a lack of action that does not fit into temporal categories, as far as he understands them.

The final line in book 8’s pause—like the final line in Michael’s own—is telling. The phrase “as new waked” suggests that Adam feels like he is experiencing his first memory for a second time. Recounting his story, Adam will narrate, “‘As new waked from soundest sleep / Soft on the flowery herb I found me laid / In balmy sweat, which with his beams the sun / Soon dried, and on the reeking moisture fed’” (8.253-256, emphasis added). The moment displays synchronous language. Subjects are near their verbs, and no action is delayed beyond its expected
moment—Adam simply lies down and feels the sun drying his sweat. Although
enjambment occurs, natural rhythms follow the pauses: waking follows sleep, comfort
follows waking, and the realization of sweat follows its dissipation. Adam enjoys
sufficient rest and physical peace, and the heat from the sun restores his bodily comfort.
From his first moment, Adam already experiences rhythms in Eden’s balanced landscape:
rest and waking, and moisture and dryness. Raphael’s suspension has the power to
prompt Adam to remember and re-experience the harmony he felt in his newly created
body. Adam can imagine heavenly harmony, and rest, by connecting it to his own story
of creation. Angelic accommodation does not just stop time; it makes Adam feel as if
time has begun all over again.

Lines 8.1-4 and 12.1-5 are a testament to the angelic power of accommodation
that suspends human speech. Adam responds to visions of eternity (in the first pause) and
has the potential to respond to this vision of history (in the second one). Both intervals
occur after the angels’ narratives and before a sentence wherein neither angel nor man
speaks. Because the pauses connect Adam’s point of view to eternity, and linear history
and providence, the pauses allow readers to consider how these temporal categories
overlap, and what the overlap suggests about Adam’s pre- and post-lapsarian temporal
consciousness. The moment in Book 7 represents pre-lapsarian suspension, in which
Adam is lost in the sound of Raphael’s oration; the second moment portrays post-
lapsarian synchronicity, in which Adam may speak. Adam’s response to Raphael’s vocal
power is to remember his first memory, but the second moment reveals that following the
fall, Adam gains a novel sense of power in making meaning from accommodation, which
allows him to understand his purpose in a timeline that providence oversees.
Raphael creates an orphic suspension that stills Adam’s senses, and prompts him to feel as he did when, upon waking, he sensed harmony between himself and the cosmos. While Adam does not respond, the moment of synchronicity creates the possibility for Adam to interrupt. The opportunity to interrupt matters: if Adam were to say something, it would be the inverse of Satanic suspension. Satan’s suspended language indicates his incorrect point of view—and Milton’s “counterplot” reveals that God has already foreseen what Satan will do (Hartman). After the fall, Milton suggests a possible narrative that is not Satanic plotting but is underneath the category of God’s providential point of view. If one takes into account God’s eternal plan for humankind, one can write one’s own subplot at the intersection of history and providence. With the opportunity to interrupt, Adam can take his turn to speak, to act, to wait—re-writing that individual moment, if he should choose—as long as he is in tune with God’s overall providential purpose, and in step with his “now,” knowing God’s mercy can continually makes the present “new.”

It takes time for Adam to incorporate an awareness of eternity and providence in his fallen perspective, and his conversation with Michael is necessary for him to reach this point. That he can bring together temporal categories in this way is not only significant in this text but also because this reconciling of categories looks ahead to Milton’s next achievement. Insofar as Adam must seek to understand eternity and providence from a fallen perspective, he prepares the way for Paradise Regained, where Milton’s Jesus will stand in contrast to him. Because Milton will represent Jesus as both a historical figure and the one who perfectly obeys, he completes God’s providential plan and makes possible an eternity with God. Milton’s use of temporal structures and verbal
patterns will depict Jesus as achieving what Adam cannot. Analyzing these scenes from *Paradise Lost* will help us to see the way Jesus in *Paradise Regained* overcomes Satan’s intentions to overpower God’s plans.
CHAPTER 4

DELAYED, SURPRISED, AMAZED:

MILTON’S SUSPENSIONS IN PARADISE REGAINED

*Paradise Lost*’s suspensions highlight the perspectives of the Satan, Adam, Eve, and the narrator, so that we might think about a subject’s purpose in terms of history, providence, and eternity. After Satan descends into Eden, Eve and Adam begin to anticipate scenarios they have not yet considered. They overvalue their subjective experience both before and after the fall, until Michael provides Adam the means to reconcile temporal constructs. In this poem, Jesus provides readers an example of how one might rightly bring together his subjective experience, history and providence. Satan’s goal is for Jesus to lose sight of providence and see himself as only a subject, and Milton’s formal patterns reveal Satan’s intentions. Satan will present alternative storylines to himself, his crew, and the Son, just as he has prompted Eve to imagine these alternatives in *Paradise Lost*. During key scenes in *Paradise Regained*, Milton makes the conflict between fallen and perfect subjectivity even more central, since Jesus’s ability to maintain his obedience is necessary for him to be a perfect offering and restore humans’ relationship with God.

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84 David Quint argues that Jesus’s temptations parallel those of Eve in *Paradise Lost*: “Satan aims in *Paradise Regained*, as he had with Eve in *Paradise Lost*, to turn such high aspirations into self-serving ones: above all, to substitute the quest of worldly fame and glory for Jesus’s self-sacrificing mission—or even more insidiously, to reveal fame and glory to be the real motives of that mission,” p. 170. Quint reads *Paradise Regained* as particularly in conversation with “the temptation of Eve.”
The pivotal moment in John Milton’s *Paradise Regained* is when Satan, who once “stood” in Chaos, falls. In *Milton’s Spenser*, Maureen Quilligan observes that the fall of Satan “interested Milton greatly—it is the climax of *Paradise Regained*” (111), yet she stops there. Maggie Kilgour has recently analyzed this moment to explore the significance of Milton’s allusion to Hercules and Antaeus, but Kilgour misses that the allusion to Antaeus recalls Edmund Spenser’s Arthur and Maleger episode in *The Faerie Queene* II.xi. In this chapter, I suggest that Milton transforms Spenser’s use of the myth and pauses from this episode, so that we might remember Arthur’s contest with Maleger as we closely read the pinnacle scene. I argue for a new reading of this moment of *Paradise Regained* by examining Milton’s use of formal suspension and Spenser’s pauses together. By refashioning Spenser’s pauses, allusion to Antaeus, and Arthur’s self-baptism, Milton will invite us to remember Satan’s position at the beginning of this poem, as well as to see that at the close, nothing for him is changed. Looking back to Spenser in this way, Milton asks us to become the kind of readers Spenser hoped to fashion, who are able to correctly interpret a subject’s experience in time. Ultimately, *Paradise Regained* depicts Jesus and Satan as models for how one should (and should not) position oneself in temporal constructs.

**Satan’s Fallen Subjectivity: Suspension in Book 1**

The narrator opens *Paradise Regained* with a formally suspended sentence in which he relates his narrative career to historical time. He begins,

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85 *Paradise Lost* 2.918.
86 See Kilgour pp. 75-113.
I who erewhile the happy Garden sung,

By one man’s disobedience lost, now sing

Recovered Paradise to all mankind,

By one man’s firm obedience fully tried

Through all temptation, and the tempter foiled

In all his wiles, defeated and repulsed,

And Eden raised in the waste wilderness. (1.1-7)

The narrator is positioning himself in two temporalities, that of his own career (“I . . .
who sung,” . . . now sing) and that of Biblical history. He reflects on his past triumph,
Paradise Lost, and looks forward to what he will write in the present. To fulfill this task,
his personal, poetic career will overlap with a historical event, Jesus’s temptation in the
wilderness, and formal suspension dramatizes these two temporalities. The separation
between subject and verbs (“I . . . who sing”), the enjambment across lines 2-3 and 4-5,
and the adverbial and prepositional phrases cause readers to move forward slowly. In
lines 3 and 7, we learn of the narrator’s topic, “recovered Paradise” or, more specifically,
“Eden raised in the waste wilderness” (1.7). Before that final line, we must first read
several clauses and prepositional phrases, such as “by one man’s disobedience lost,” “by
one man’s firm obedience fully tried,” “through all temptation,” and “in all his wiles.”
These suspensions are significant for several reasons. Suspensions delay the revelation of
the last line; similarly, the Israelites waited for God to reveal Jesus in linear history.
Although these phrases get delay the reference to Eden, in them, we learn of Jesus’s
obedience: He is the way to raise Paradise once again. Readers take time to move past
these delays, just as it will take time for Jesus to overturn Satan’s temptations. This sentence is also important because the poet’s reading of the historical past is typological. Jesus will redeem humankind in fallen time: the last line superimposes Eden’s fall with Jesus’s power to withstand Satan’s temptation. Remaining obedient, Jesus is doing what Adam and Eve were not able to do in the garden.

Significantly, this final line revises Satan’s pause in Chaos in light of Jesus’s obedience. “Eden raised in the waste wilderness” specifically recalls Milton’s description of Chaos as a “wild abyss” and “wasteful deep” (Paradise Lost 9.915, 917, emphasis mine). When Satan pauses there, the moment initiates fallen, linear time, because his forward movement will set in motion the events of the fall. As Satan stands, he hears sounds that Milton compares to the cacophony of war: the noises ring as “when Bellona storms, / With all her battering engines bent to raze / Some capital city” (2.922-924). Armed with hate for God, Satan will move ahead to raze humankind; in this way, one could say that Satan razes Eden in the wasteful wild of Chaos. If “raze” is a key word in Paradise Lost that communicates Satan’s destructive nature, Milton plays on the word “raze” with the word “rise,” which conveys the consequences of his actions on Adam and Eve: after they disobey God, “nor only tears / Rained at their eyes, but high winds worse within / Began to rise” (9.1121-23, my italics). After they disobey

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87 In the poem, Jesus will wait for God to glorify Him at the proper time.
88 See Quint, p. 170.
89 Like the word “raise,” wilderness, too, recalls the passage from book 2 in Paradise Lost, because the word suggests the desert as a typological representation of Chaos. Chaos can be represented in a number of “allegorical places” that include “forests or woods, caves, and lakes.” See John E. Hankins’s entry, “Chaos,” in The Spenser Encyclopedia, p. 139.
God, sin arises in them, evidence to Satan’s victory in the garden.\textsuperscript{90} Fittingly, Milton uses the word “raise” to signify Jesus’s ability to reverse in the “waste wilderness” of the desert what Satan has accomplished in another wild landscape. The word “raise” also foreshadows the end of \textit{Paradise Regained}, when Satan, who once “stood” in Chaos, will “fall” (Quilligan 111). Milton’s use of suspension in the opening sentence suggests that Jesus’s obedience will result in victory both in the “now” of the poem and for all eternity. He will “raise” Eden, and after his death on the cross, He will arise from the dead for humankind. His actions will undo the curse of death, the punishment for Adam and Eve’s disobedience.

While suspension in the first sentence illustrates one way Milton will bring temporal categories together in \textit{Paradise Regained}, Milton will also use suspension to characterize Satan’s subjective experience of temporality, as we have seen in \textit{Paradise Lost}. Early in book 1, Milton represents Satan’s perspective as less powerful than providence when we learn Satan’s intention to tempt Jesus. We read,

So to the Coast of Jordan he directs

His easy steps, girded with snaky wiles,

Where he might likeliest find this new-declared,

This man of men, attested Son of God,

Temptation and all guile on him to try,

So to subvert whom he suspected \textit{raised}

To end his reign on Earth so long enjoyed:

But contrary unweeting he fulfilled

\textsuperscript{90} See Quint, who traces the words “arise,” “raze,” and “roused” in Milton’s hell (32-33). See also my Chapter 3, where I discuss 9.1119-1133.
The purposed counsel preordained and fixed  
Of the Most High, who in full frequence bright  
Of angels, thus to Gabriel smiling spake. (1.119-129, emphasis added)

The formal elements cause us to pause within the lines. The word “might” introduces the possibility that Satan will locate Jesus, and lines 124-125 are enjambed. At the end of line 124, we are left in suspense as we wonder what the Son is “raised” to do. Once we read that He is “raised / To end his [Satan’s] reign,” we see this line looks back to 1.7, in which the poet says that it is Eden that will be raised. Taken together, these two instances of “raise” are typological, because one looks backward to the fall (1.7), and the next looks ahead to the apocalypse (1.124). But here, the apocalypse is read from Satan’s perspective: Satan’s reign is one that he “so long enjoyed” (125). After we read how Satan’s feels about his limited power over humankind, the line stops us with a colon, and a “But” reverses readers from Satan’s perspective to providence’s plan. As the “Most High,” God is most able to glorify Jesus as His son, as well as to use Satan’s plans for His own ends. With the word “raised,” Milton is once more overturning what Satan has planned to do. Beyond juxtaposing Satan’s subjectivity and divine omnipotence, the pause between “raised / To end” reflects the gap in historical time between the old-testament prophecies and Jesus’s new-testament appearing. Like the Israelites who look towards the promise of Jesus’s birth without seeing it first-hand, the line creates a space for readers to expect what Jesus will do, even though he has not accomplished it yet.

Using suspension, Milton underscores the precarious “now” of Jesus’s temptation and privileges Satan’s point of view during Jesus’s baptism, a central event in Milton’s
During the scene, Milton’s formal suspension connects the historical and providential moment to Satan’s self-interested viewpoint:

Now had the great Proclaimer with a voice

More awful then the sound of Trumpet, cried

Repentance, and Heavens Kingdom nigh at hand

To all baptized: to his great baptism flocked

With awe the regions round, and with them came

From Nazareth the Son of Joseph deemed

To the flood Jordan, came as then obscure,

Unmarked, unknown; but him the Baptist soon

Descried, divinely warned, and witness bore

As to his worthier, and would have resigned

To him his Heavenly Office, nor was long

His witness unconfirmed: on him baptized

Heaven opened, and in likeness of a Dove

The Spirit descended, while the Father’s voice

From Heav’n pronounced him his beloved Son.

That heard the Adversary, who roving still

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91 Quint asserts, “The scene is repeatedly, almost obsessively recalled over the course of Paradise Regained by Satan to the demonic council (1.81-85), by Jesus himself in his meditations (1.280-86), by Satan again to Jesus (1.327-30), where Satan significantly already links it to ‘fame’) (1.334), by the bereft disciples (2.50-52) and Mary (2.83-85), and by Satan still again near the poem’s end (4.510-13),” p. 169. Jeffrey Morris also writes, “The opening scene of the baptism is informed by three viewpoints, the testimony of each serving as a fragment trying to complete a picture of the whole which centers on Christ. All these testimonies occur in different places in the poem, yet they all bring us back to the same moment” (226).
About the world, at that assembly famed

Would not be last, and with the voice divine

Nigh Thunder-struck, th’exalted man, to whom

Such high attest was giv’n, a while surveyed

With wonder, then with envy fraught and rage

Flies to his place, nor rests, but in mid-air

To council summons all his mighty peers,

Within thick clouds and dark ten-fold involv’d,

A gloomy consistory; and them amidst

With looks aghast and sad he thus bespake. (1.18-43, italics mine)

These two sentences delay our progress, so that we pay attention to John’s words and Jesus’s identity. Milton’s conditional wording, enjambment, colons, and semicolons work together to protract the baptism. Specifically, the passage opens with syntactic suspension: the core of the first sentence is that the “Proclaimer . . . cried,” but the noun does not take its verb “cried” until the end of the following line. Because of the enjambment in line 19, readers hold their breath at the end of the line, after “cried,” only to hear the object of the verb: “Repentance.” The enjambment between lines 19 and 20 causes John’s indirect speech to interrupt the poet’s narration. The gap between the lines blurs this distinction between the poet’s and the prophet’s words. While “repentance” is what John cries out, no quotation marks signal that he is speaking. After the colon in line 21, Milton’s syntax quiets Jesus’s appearance. It is easy to read over the description of him, because the words veil his identity:
to his great Baptism flocked

With awe the regions round, and with them came

From Nazareth the Son of Joseph deemed

To the flood Jordan, came as then obscure,

Unmarked, unknown . . . (1.21-25)

The enjambment after the word “came” begins a pattern of anticipation. We expect to hear that it is the “Son” who “came,” but Milton waits to identify Him until the middle of the line. Milton hems Jesus’s appearing between the prepositional phrases, “from Nazareth” and “of Joseph.” Then, Milton starts the pattern again with the word “came” in line 24. Jesus blends into the lines just as he might blend into the crowd, identified by his birthplace and parentage, as if he were any other man. These formal choices make Jesus’s appearance in the lines “obscure / Unmarked, unknown” (25). His appearance is followed by a reversal: “but him the Baptist soon / Descried, divinely warned, and witness bore / As to his worthier” (1.25-27). In this instance, the “but him” reveals that John recognizes Jesus—what others, and even some readers, may have failed to see at first. Then, a minor pause suspends this revelation, when the adverb and verb that describe how quickly John recognizes Jesus are separated by enjambment: John “soon / descried” Him (25-26).

The formal suspension stresses Jesus’s unassuming presence, and it also heightens the shift in perspective at the end of the passage to Satan’s point of view. In line 32, we learn that Satan is the one listening to God’s words that confirm Jesus is indeed God’s Son. In lines 35-43, the conditional wording—Satan “would not be last”—signals we are viewing the scene from his perspective. The conditional phrasing here invites readers to compare both instances of conditional language in the passage, one in line 27, where the
poet says that John “would have resigned” Jesus to his “heavenly office,” and another in line 35, where we learn that Satan is determined he “would not” to be the final person to arrive to the baptism. The difference between “would have” and “would not” clearly distinguish the prophet from the devil. Whereas John would have recognized the Son even more quickly if he could have, Satan attends because of what he’s determined not to be: the last to know. Satan’s motive is something like the fallen angel version of a fear of missing out. The wording reminds us of his never-ending role: as much as he tries to imagine that he might not be what he is, or that he could be what he’s not, for him, the prospect of a real future is absent.

Satan’s perspective formally interrupts the syntax of the passage; even further, it truncates God’s words. The context of Milton’s passage is the description of Jesus’s baptism from the gospel, where we read, “And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3.17). The final line relays God’s providence: Jesus will fulfill God’s will. Satan witnesses the baptism for fear of missing something, but he misses out anyway, because he doesn’t hear the last line. It is not until Satan’s narration to the fallen angels that he admits to hearing the final clause. Yet in the moment, Satan doesn’t immediately register it, because the force of God’s voice words outweighs the content. The occlusion of words in line 33 as Satan witnesses the baptism contributes to our understanding that Satan’s perspective is fallen; the effect of God’s voice on Satan is to render him “Thunder-struck” (1.36). This depiction connects Satan to Adam in Paradise Lost: after hearing from Michael that he must leave Paradise, “...Adam at the news / Heart-strook with chilling grip of sorrow stood / That all his

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92 Satan says, “... out of Heav’n the sov’reign voice I heard, / This is my Son belov’d, in him am pleased” (I.84-85).
senses bound” (11.263-65). At the thought of leaving the Paradise he loves, Adam cannot move or speak; at the truth that God loves Jesus, Satan fails to record all God says, at least until he later recalls the moment. Satan’s non-action here—surveying and stopping—marks his lack of power when compared to God.93

After Jesus’s baptism, when Satan speaks to his crew in hell, Milton employs formal suspension to negotiate between providence and Satan’s subjective point of view. Celebrating the “ages” in which they have “possessed” the “universe,” Satan defines his position in time with suspended language. He says that ever since the fall,

‘[I have been] With dread attending when that fatal wound
Shall be inflicted by the Seed of Eve

Upon my head, long the decrees of Heav’n

Delay, for longest time to him is short . . . ’ (1.52-55, italics mine)

From this passage, we learn that Satan continually anticipates his last judgment. The enjambed clause, “long the decrees of Heaven / Delay,” extends his expectation beyond the line. The starts and stops in 52-55 leave the words “wound,” “Seed of Eve,” and “decrees of heaven” hanging at the end of the lines—words that point out the what, who, and how in the plot of his destruction. Providence foresees that the Son will inflict Satan’s wound, yet because the what, who, and how are isolated at the end of each line, readers have a moment to wonder what words will follow each noun. Satan’s destruction is certain, but the pauses make it seem as if he hesitates to admit as much. Then, Satan swiftly states what time is like for God: brief, “for longest time to him is short” (54). The

93 The next few enjambed lines reveal Satan’s inward chaos: he “flies” and “summons” his crew together. Satan’s external and internal response to the baptism are similar to earlier moments of suspension in Paradise Lost, when Satan introduces in chaos to a scene.
first enjambed lines (52-54) are juxtaposed with the brief clause that follows them (55); Satan’s verbal rhythm is to coil before he strikes. He delivers the truth to his crew true to his own fallen state—they are indeed awaiting the Son’s powerful act—but he will proceed to question God’s abilities:

‘And now too soon for us the circling hours
This dreaded time have compassed, wherein we
Must bide the stroke of that long threaten’d wound,
At least if so we can, and by the head
Broken be not intended all our power
To be infringed, our freedom and our being
In this fair empire won of earth and air . . . ‘(1.56-63, emphasis added)

While the first two lines of this passage echo Satan’s previously stated expectations, he qualifies that position by adding “‘if so we can’” (59). They can only wait for God’s timing, yet Satan uses an alternative definition of the word “bide,” meaning “to face . . . withstand” (OED). He assumes that even if they are “‘by the head / Broken,’” their “‘power’” will not be “‘infringed.’” From Satan’s perspective, God’s final stroke might not be fatal, yet he fails to see that his power on earth will remain only as long as the earth endures. The Son’s wounding of his head presages the end of time, when Satan will remain in hell for eternity—but not according to the story that Satan tells himself and the other fallen angels.

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Satanic Subjectivity and Providence

When Satan is in hell, the narrator displays that Satan’s subjective point of view contrasts that of providence. After Jesus sees Satan, who is disguised as an “aged man” in the wilderness, Satan’s first action is to question God’s power. While Satan asks what “ill chance” brings Jesus there, Jesus places his faith in God’s providence by using synchronicity: “Who brought me hither / Will bring me hence, no other guide I seek” (1.335-36). Jesus’s response brings together his historical present with providence, because he trusts in His Father’s sovereignty. Although Jesus uses a negation, “no other,” it is to reject any entity other than God. Jesus suggests God has power over his past, present, and future. Satan’s replies utilize formal suspension. To Jesus’s unwavering faith, Satan responds by casting doubt on God’s sovereignty: “By miracle he may, reply’d the swain. / What other way I see not . . .” (I.337-38, emphasis mine). Satan seeks to portray himself as not introducing another way, thereby already denying his next move: to offer his own version of truth. As in Matthew’s gospel, Milton’s Satan proceeds to use a hypothetical to tempt Jesus: “But if thou be the Son of God, command / That out of these hard stones be made thee bread” (1.342-43). Satan denies what he hasn’t yet said to try to prevent Jesus from seeing Satan’s words for what they are, a temptation to disobey. Jesus shows the Biblical precedence for the persistence under trial that he models. The Son asserts that God is the one

‘ . . . who fed

Our Fathers here with manna; in the mount
Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drank,
And forty days Eliah without food
Wandered this barren waste, the same I now:

Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust,

Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art?’ (I.350-56)\(^95\)

Jesus’s words in lines 350-56 are not in the gospel account. The Biblical text reads, “It is written, That man shall not live by bread only, but by every word of God” (Luke 4.4). Adding lines 35-56, Milton creates a moment of synchronicity where Jesus refers to Biblical history and to providence. Jesus can look to the past and see his place in history: he, like the prophets, must face this temptation, but his words remind us that God will provide for him, just as God provided manna for the Israelites. Although this passage includes negation, enjambment, and a colon, our expectations are not surprised as we move through the passage. Jesus is aware of his historical position, and reminds himself of God’s power to counteract Satan’s temptation. The colon after “now” delays His words, but no reversal occurs in the next line. Jesus calls Satan out on his attempts, but the Son’s response reveals His relationship to God, that Satan knows who he is (1.356). Jesus’s reply, “I am,” illustrates his position in relation to God.\(^96\) The lines reflect that he is not surprised by his hunger; he simply rests in trusting his Father.

\(^95\) Jesus’s words in lines 350-56 are not in the gospel account. The Biblical text reads, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4.4); Milton adds lines 35-56.

\(^96\) For Milton’s beliefs about the Son’s relationship with God the Father, see On Christian Doctrine, “On the Son of God,” where Milton analyzes John 10.36 and 15.20-21: “do you say that I whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, blaspheme because I have said, I am the Son of God? It must be that this is said of two persons, distinct in essence and, moreover, not equal to each other. . . They are one in that they speak and act as one . . . he and the Father are one in the same way as we are one with him: that is, not in essence but in love, in communion, in agreement, in charity, in spirit, and finally in glory. John 15.20, 21: on that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me shall be loved by my father,” p. 1179.
This moment also reveals Jesus’s humanity: his hunger and thirst evince the physical cycle of eating and digesting. Like Eve, whom Satan tempts as she sleeps in *Paradise Lost*’s Book 4, Jesus experiences temptation as he feels hunger. During Eve’s dream, Satan presents alternative roles to her to heighten her sense of self (*Paradise Lost* 4.800-809) and in the hope that she won’t recognize the futility of imagining these alternatives. Contrasting Eve, Jesus does recognize Satan’s intent to shift his obedience by altering Jesus’s self-perception. In response, Jesus combats Satanic possibilities with a right understanding of Himself, his enemy, and the relationship between him and God. Because this is what Eve wasn’t able to do, Milton is showing us that if one can remember one’s true position in relation to God’s providence, one can dismantle Satanic fabrications.

Like the formal suspensions in *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s formal suspensions at the end of Book I in *Paradise Regained* continue to delineate Satan’s fallen point of view. After Satan alludes to Job and 1 Kings as examples of his power on earth, he frames his role as one who submits to God:

> ‘For what he bids I do; though I have lost
> Much luster of my native brightness, lost
> To be beloved of God, I have not lost
> To love, at least contemplate and admire
> What I see excellent in good, or fair,
> Or vertuous, I should so have lost all sense.’ (I.377-82)

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97 See note 60.
98 Like Jesus, Eve is also isolated from Adam and tempted on her own.
The semicolon, enjambed lines, conditional wording, and repetition slow Satan’s reply. He says he is obedient, only to admit that his relationship to God has changed. The semicolon adds a pause after he suggests his willingness to obey. He fabricates and hesitates, and then recognizes that his position is fallen. The repetition of “lost” places emphasis upon the role he once had. Although he can still see virtue, he continues to invent truth before rewriting it, according to the role he imagines himself to hold. Indeed, he lapses again to detail his role on earth:

‘Men generally think me much a foe
To all mankind: why should I? they to me
Never did wrong or violence, by them
I lost not what I lost, rather by them
I gained what I have gained, and with them dwell
Copartner in these regions of the world,
If not disposer; lend them oft my aid,
Oft my advice by presages and signs,
And answers, oracles, portents and dreams,
Whereby they may direct their future life.’ (I.387-96, emphasis added)

The more Satan strives to understand himself, the more his words become tangled, negative, repetitive, hypothetical, and conditional. He doesn’t consider himself at enmity with humankind; rather, he reframes his role in much more positive terms. Satan renames himself a “Copartner . . . If not disposer” (I.391-92). He’d like to consider himself as a distributer of sorts, offering his point of view here and there in order to help humans out where he can. But if readers recall, the very role he is describing looks back to one of his
first actions in Eden: the moment he scattered the drops of self-delusion on Eve’s sleeping consciousness, and she awakes in tears (*PL* 5.129-35). Since his first entrance into Eden, neither Satan’s technique nor his verbal tactics have changed much.

As humans envision alternative storylines in which they fail to rightly account for their relationship to God and time, Satan leads them away from divine truth. Without knowing their purpose in time in relation to God, humans cannot exhibit certain faith, the kind of response that Milton’s Jesus exhibits. Satan’s opening words to Jesus, “what other way I see not,” are a testament to Satan’s blinded consciousness, in which he continually shifts from truth to a new perception of it, and hopes that others do the same. He ends with no hope: “This wounds me most (what can it less) that man, / Man fall'n, shall be restored, I never more” (1.404-05, emphasis mine). This brief suspension in 1.404-05 contains parentheses, enjambment, repetition, and negation. When Satan looks ahead to the wound the Son will inflict, his admission projects what we already know—that he will forever lack redemption. Even though he tries to imagine otherwise, he always returns to futility, the point where he began; “Never more” signals an eternity that cannot be altered. The negative wording stands out because Milton has previously employed “once more” and “no more” to speak of his narrative career and the apocalypse. Further, the parenthetical phrase “(what can it less)” is similar in form and content to an early moment in *Paradise Lost*, when the fallen angels distract themselves from their pain:

Their Song was partial, but the harmony

(What *could it less* when spirits immortal sing?)

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99 I analyze the suspension in both moments (see my chapter 2).
100 See the opening sentence in *Lycidas*. 
Suspended hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience. (*Paradise Lost* 2.552-555, italics mine)

Both parenthetical interruptions, “(what can it less)” and “(what could it less . . .)” suspend the passage, and even more significantly, depict that for those who have fallen, some things never change. The first passage suggests that, for Satan, longing for what he can’t have is something that he’ll always do. The second passage from *Paradise Lost* displays the never-ceasing power of harmony to interrupt the fallen angels—even if it lasts only for a moment. The similar parentheticals in these passages exemplify that at both the individual and cosmic level, the fallen angels can distract themselves, whether it is by imagining restoration or by singing—but not for long. These moments show the all-important distinction between fallen interruption and divinely-achieved cessation. The fallen angels can feel a pause, but they can “never more” experience harmony with God.

Still, because Jesus obeys God in the desert (and on the cross), He will attain the “no more” that repairs human’s broken relationship with divinity. His obedience will create the possibility for humans to be restored and redeemed from self-delusion, hesitation, and despair. After the “no more” that Jesus achieves, humans will be able to enjoy this relationship with God; fallen angels cannot.

Milton brings together Satan’s subjective experience with Jesus’s understanding of providence in the way Jesus counteracts Satanic suspension, canceling it by using negative wording and repetition to show His victory is sure. Jesus nullifies nulls Satan’s point of view when he argues,

‘. . . the happy place

Imparts to thee *no* happiness, *no* joy,
Rather inflames thy torment, representing
Lost bliss, to thee no more communicable,

So *never more* in hell then when in heaven.’ (1.416-420, emphasis added)

Using Satan’s own verbal tactics, Jesus dispenses truth to the disposer of lies. Jesus uses Satan’s “never more” to a new end; Satan’s knows he will “never more” experience redemption—and he should know he could never be happy in heaven there again, either. Jesus also uses negation to show that Satan’s power on earth will now be limited: “‘No more shalt thou by oracling abuse / The Gentiles’” (1.455-56), and once again, “‘thou no more with pomp and sacrifice / Shalt be enquir’d at Delphos or elsewhere, / . . . for they shall find thee mute’” (1.457-59). Jesus’s silencing of Satan foretells Satan’s final punishment at the end of time, after the apocalypse.

**Missing Jesus**

Several moments of suspension and synchronicity in book 3 highlight the human longing to know God’s providential plan. After Jesus disappears into the wilderness, the disciples try to trust that he will return. The word “now” occurs 12 times in the first 146 lines of book 2. Because the narrator, apostles, Mary, and Satan all use this word, book 2’s suspensions and synchronicity suggest the importance of incorporating history and providence into one’s understanding of time. Book 1 repeats the word “long” to dramatize Satanic subjectivity, but the word “now” highlights this historical moment. Particularly, the opening of book 2 dramatizes the apostles’ perspective. After Jesus disappears, they are tempted to lose faith:
Meanwhile the new-baptized, who yet remained
At Jordan with the Baptist, and had seen
Him whom they heard so late expressly called
Jesus Messiah Son of God declared,
And on that high Authority had believed,
And with him talked, and with him lodged, I mean
Andrew and Simon, famous after known
With others though in Holy Writ not named,
Now missing him their joy so lately found,
So lately found, and so abruptly gone,
Began to doubt, and doubted many days,
And as the days increased, increased their doubt:
Sometimes they thought he might be only shown,
And for a time caught up to God, as once
Moses was in the Mount, and missing long;
And the great Thisbite who on fiery wheels
Rode up to Heav’n, yet once again to come. (2.1-17, emphasis mine)

Within this sentence, formal suspension separates verbs from their objects, prepositional phrases delay the main subject and verb, and the colon and semicolon create pauses as we near the end. The core of the sentence tells us that Andrew and Simon “Began to doubt,” but we must wander through several enjambed lines before we hear not just that they lack faith, but that their doubt has accumulated over in time. The verbs at the end of lines 1-5 look to the disciples’ past, when they acted out of faith. Between lines 2-3, and 3-4,
enjambment produces a pause between the description of the disciples’ actions and the references to Jesus. The disciples are steadfast, they “remained / At Jordan,” and they have reason to trust Jesus, because they “had seen / Him” and heard Him “called / Jesus.” The enjambed lines create pauses that parallel the distinct gap between them and Him, both in His location and His relationship with God; now more than ever, they long for Him, yet feel His absence from them, and their difference from Him. In lines 9-11, Milton introduces a pattern and then restarts it when he ends line 9 with “So lately found” and begins the following line with that same phrase. That repetition begins a pattern of recurring words that lead us to “And as the days increased, increased their doubt,” which is suspended by a colon at the end of the line, just as their doubt delays their faith.

This moment stops us in order to represent what Jesus’s absence feels like for the disciples—a brief lapse in their faith, and a delay across diurnal time. Despite their longing for Jesus’s presence, he isn’t there. A conditional marks that they are uncertain about the future:

Sometimes they thought he might be only shown,

And for a time caught up to God, as once

Moses was in the Mount, and missing long . . . (13-15)

The conditional word “might” suggests what the disciples imagine to be a real possibility—that Jesus has been taken up into heaven. The disciples dwell for a moment in their vision of what might have happened to Jesus; they compare His situation to that of Moses, who received the ten commandments from God when he was absent from the Israelites.101 Because these three lines look back to Moses’s disappearance, a typological

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101 See Exodus 31-32.
event, we see the disciples making sense of their present by looking back to Biblical history. Although they “doubt,” they consider the “Mount” where God delivered his law to Moses, providing His presence and guidance when his people were in the wilderness. “Found” and “doubt” are in opposition to one another: the disciples move from faith to fear by looking back to a Biblical moment in which God proved faithful.

To reverse their doubt, the disciples not only look backward in time but also look forward to the end of history. The disciples remember that in addition to Moses, who was absent and returned, “the great Thisbite who on fiery wheels” went “up to Heaven, yet once again to come” (16-17). These lines transform the disciples’ present expectation of Jesus’s return from the wilderness into a moment in which they envision the past (the prophet was taken into heaven early), and the future, when he, as a type of Christ, will return. Although the disciples experience doubt, one day, they will see the efforts of their faith bear fruition in the final judgment.

Because of the formal suspension in this moment, and the disciples’ longing for Jesus’s presence, the disciples’ delay can be compared to the deferral Adam experiences after Eve leaves his side to work alone. Employing suspension to describe the disciples in Paradise Regained, Milton redeems the moment when the fall interrupts Adam’s heartbeat (Paradise Lost 9.845-46). Adam awaits Eve’s return only to discover she has disobeyed, and his hopes are devastated. The disciples wait for Jesus to return, and he will have remained obedient. Standing firm, Jesus will rewrite fallen time, redeem the destruction sin has caused, and restore harmony between God and the cosmos, and God and man. Afraid of being disappointed, the disciples look to the biblical past and future,
but unlike Adam, they won’t be disappointed, and they try to believe after experiencing doubt.

The narrator suspends the description of the disciples’ subjective temporal experience. Similarly, the disciples’ words are also formally delayed (lines 30-57). Because their expectations have been postponed, they must believe God will bring Jesus back and glorify Him. Particularly, lines 35-40 detail their liminal position:

‘Now, now, for sure, deliverance is at hand,
The Kingdom shall to Israel be restored:
Thus we rejoiced, but soon our joy is turned
Into perplexity and new amaze:
For whither is he gone, what accident
Hath rapt him from us?’ (2.35-40, emphasis mine)

While the punctuation creates three parts, suspension occurs in the first two parts, in lines 35-38. The first two pairs of clauses end with a colon; likewise, a colon adds a temporal gap after “new amaze” (38). Although the pairs of clauses are similar to each other in form, “now” refers to the overall historical moment, while “new” refers to the disciples’ experience of it. The disciples long for Jesus to provide them freedom on earth. They are able to anticipate what will happen in the future, yet their confusion casts doubt on what they hope for. Nevertheless, they are able to turn from what they think God should do right now to trust His timing: “But let us wait” (49). They resolve to take “all” their “fears” and “Lay on his Providence,” because “he will not fail / Nor will withdraw him

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102 This moment may be compared to when the fallen angels await Satan’s return journey.
103 In Paradise Lost, Milton often juxtaposes “now” with “new” to highlight alternatives that lie outside of providence (see my chapter 3).
now, nor will recall, / Mock us with his blest sight, then snatch him hence, / Soon we shall see our hope, our joy return” (2.54-57). Lines 55-57 contain pentameter lines with a caesura after the third iambic foot, and the caesuras delay our movement. The suspended syntax in their speech provides a direct insight into their point of view. Because of the negations, the disciples seem to be convincing themselves what God won’t do. Indeed, if Milton had used the conditional word “might”—if we had read, “he might not fail”—the meaning of the passage would be much more dramatic and satanic. But Milton uses negations with parallel structure to reveal the disciples’ fragile faith.

Beginning book 2 with suspensions that highlight the disciples’ subjectivity and Jesus’s providence, Milton places emphasis upon the human response to Jesus’s absence in the historical moment of his temptation. The disciples live in an especially liminal position in time, wherein they have experienced some of Jesus’s power first-hand, but they have not seen His full glorification. Fittingly, the disciples voice their concerns on the boundary line of water and earth, “on the bank of Jordan, by a Creek,” that signifies their temporal position (25) in historical time that places them in-between Jesus’s appearance and his death, resurrection, and eventual return. Although the human tendency may be to doubt, Milton suggests that providence allows them to have faith. They haven’t heard the end of the story; even so, they can trust it is in God’s hands. Their trust here sets up a contrast to moments in Paradise Lost in which the fallen angels, who falsely hope, await Satan’s volunteering and then his return (Paradise Lost 4.17 and 5.21-27). By using elements of suspension to portray the disciples’ point of view, Milton suggests that because of Jesus’s divinity, humans can rest in providence even while they experience doubts.
The Son’s Faith in Providence

In book 2, Milton juxtaposes the disciples’ wavering between doubt and faith with Jesus’s steadfast trust in providence, even though he experiences time similarly. Because Jesus’s sense of time is that time passes slowly—he asks, “Where will this end”—it is subjective, but he does not stay focused on the delay for long. Before this moment, Jesus has admitted that during the first 40 days in the desert, he did not feel hungry. Finally, he begins to feel those pangs: “But now I feel I hunger, which declares, / Nature hath need of what she asks” (2.253-54). Rather than dwelling in subjectivity, he turns his attention from physical discomfort to God:

‘ . . . yet God

Can satisfy that need some other way,

Though hunger still remain: so it remain

Without this body’s wasting, I content me,

And from the sting of Famine fear no harm,

Nor mind it, fed with better thoughts that feed

Me hung’ring more to do my Father’s will.’ (2.253-259, emphasis added) 104

Whereas in moments of suspension, negation, repetition, and enjambment slow us down and disrupt our expectations, the delays in these lines are working to show how Jesus reconciles his temporal position with his trust in God’s providence. The semicolon and colon insert pauses between clauses, but as he continues, he does not reverse the hope

104 David Lee Miller points out to me that Milton may have had Spenser’s The Faerie Queene II.vii.2.3-5 in mind here. There, a description of Guyon reads, “on his way, of none accompanyde; / And evermore himself with comfort feedes, / Of his own vertues, and praise-worthy deedes.”
that God will provide for Him. Repetition, another characteristic of suspension, is present, yet the repetition does not create chaos in the lines. Instead, it signals his accord with God the Father: his hunger may “remain,” but it will not end in his death (2.255-56). Here, Jesus aligns himself with God’s will. After he is hungry in the moment, he reflects on divine power: “Yet God / Can satisfy that need . . .” (2.254-55). He chooses to be satiated with a longing to participate in God’s plan and reflect on His providence. Even the negations he uses evince his confidence: he anticipates “no harm,” and likewise does not “mind” his situation. His echoes the words “fed” and “feed” to say that remembering God’s providence is what nourishes Him. Milton brings together human subjectivity and faith in providence to reveal that Jesus has peace not just for the present, but for a future without fear.

As Jesus lies down to rest, synchronicity communicates that the world around Him is at peace, and He experiences harmony with it. Before he dreams, he lays down underneath the “hospitable covert” of “interwoven” trees (2.262-263). Whereas Satan is a “disposer” of false illusions, God is a provider of “repose” (2.275). After waking up, Jesus is encouraged to remain obedient:

Thus wore out night, and now the herald lark
Left his ground-nest, high tow’ring to descry
The morns approach, and greet her with his song:
As lightly from his grassy couch up rose
Our Savior, and found all was but a dream;
Fasting he went to sleep, and fasting waked. (2.279-284)
The lines compare Jesus’s position to the lark in nature. The bird is in tune with the morning; nature and diurnal time exist in harmony when Jesus is near. His presence seems to create a return to a pre-lapsarian state. The passage includes three lines that describe the bird, and three lines that describe Jesus’s awakening. The balance in the lines reflects the harmony both within nature and between Jesus and God. Jesus, like the bird, arises, and like Elijah in his dream, rises up to face temptation once again. He stands up “lightly,” as if he is glad to participate in God’s plan to redeem mankind. It seems as if He were made for this role, just as the bird appears to announce the dawn. By invoking the lark, Milton suggests that Jesus is “(Like to the lark at break of day arising / From sullen earth),” who “sings hymns at heaven’s gate” (Shakespeare 29.11-12). Milton’s echo of Shakespeare recalls post-lapsarian Adam and Eve, who feel chaos “rise” in them (Paradise Lost 9.1121-23). In the wilderness, Jesus arises to correct what Satan has razed. Because he has faith in God’s providence, Jesus can experience peace even in the midst of temptation.

Soon, Satan’s presence shatters the synchronicity of this passage, because he hopes to sway Jesus from a providential vantage point. Satan presents an incorrect reading of the situation before he introduces an alternative storyline that Jesus might believe. Satan asks “If food were now before thee set, / Would’st thou not eat?” (2.319-320). After Jesus responds by saying it would depend on who provides it, Satan uses conditional phrasing to propose what Jesus might do—that is, what Jesus might do under hypothetical circumstances. Satan hopes that Jesus might imagine what he longs for, so

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105 Another parallel between this moment and Shakespeare’s sonnet is that Shakespeare’s speaker is “alone,” and he concludes by saying, “[I] scorn to change my state with kings” (14). Milton’s Jesus will end book 2 by defining the proper qualities of a king, lines 2.457-486.
that he will then be moved to disobedience. Satan hopes to alter Jesus’s understanding of his position in relationship to both God the Father and nature. With negation, Satan asks Jesus, “Hast thou not right to all Created things . . . ?” (2.324), and with conditional language, Satan encourages Jesus to “behold / Nature asham’d, or better to express, / Troubl’d that thou shouldst hunger . . .” (2.331-333). Distorting Jesus’s position both in the cosmos and in the Godhead, Satan works to rewrite Jesus’s role. Jesus is not superior to God’s will, nor is He subject to please nature. He is here to correct what has been broken in the cosmos when the fall occurred. To obey like Jesus, subjectivity must be brought together with an understanding of providence.

Satan’s Stops: Standing “awhile” in Books 3-4

Books 3 and 4 arrest our movement with literal pauses in the narrative—suspensions that reflect Jesus’s power to remind Satan of his true position. Also, in contrast to suspended moments, Milton employs synchronicity when Jesus speaks in order to show Jesus’s right understanding of his position in relation to both God and time. After Jesus points out Satan is the antithesis to the type of king Jesus has described, Satan is at a loss for words:

So spake the Son of God, and Satan stood
A while as mute confounded what to say,
What to reply, confuted and convinced
Of his weak arguing and fallacious drift;
At length collecting all his Serpent wiles,
With soothing words renewed, him thus accosts. (3.1-5)
The formal elements here, such as the enjambment, repetition, and semicolon draw out this moment. Enjambment separates the verb “stood” from “awhile as mute,” and because Satan is standing silently, this passage evokes his stance at opening of the poem, where he “a while surveyed / With wonder,” as well as his pause in Chaos, where he “stood” and “looked a while” (Paradise Regained 1.37-38, Paradise Lost 9.918). The lines here lack the length, negations, and separation between subject and verb that characterize Satan’s pause at 2.918. This pause differs from that one, because here, Satan anticipates his move after having been confronted with truth. Milton will continue to depict how hearing Jesus’s definition of kingship impacts Satan, who does not know “what to say / What to reply” (2-3). The enjambment between those two parallel phrases elongates Satan’s silence. The semicolon in line 4 adds another pause, perhaps to amplify our expectations for what Satan might do next. (He assumes his composure “at length,” 5). Satan brings together his “wiles”: he’s both recovering his deluded point of view and, at the literal level, seeking to control over his many whiles, these small gaps in time in which divine truth stills his intellect, posture, and speech.

Manipulating the pause, or controlling his time, is the type of action Satan hopes Jesus will take. For this reason, Satan employs historical examples to sway Jesus away from faith in providence. Still, Jesus rejects satanic alternatives. Satan urges Jesus to seize his moment right now, before the time providence has ordained: “‘Thy years are ripe, and over-ripe’” (3.31). Satan uses Philip, Cyrus, and Pompey as examples of individuals who have achieved powerful roles because they did not wait to take action. He encourages Jesus to not be like Julius Caesar, who “The more he grew in years, the more inflamed / With glory, wept that he had lived so long / Inglorious: but thou yet art
not too late” (3.40-42). Satan’s point of view once again overemphasizes subjective temporality: he thinks the Son should make a decision based on his sense of readiness rather than His father’s timing and His role in relation to it.

After revealing his own reading of historical examples—he references Job, Socrates, and Scipio, men who suffered across a span of time—Jesus once again asserts his deity. Speaking of glory, he says, “I seek not mine, but his / Who sent me, and thereby witness whence I am” (106-107). Jesus uses synchronicity here: his words here are clear, and the second clause explains the first one, rather than reversing or interrupting our expectations. When Jesus uses a negation, His “not . . . but” counters Satan’s “but thou yet are not too late” (3.42). Even further, Jesus is undoing the “if . . . but” mentality we have seen Satan exemplify in Paradise Lost, where Satan rejects the future after hoping for what might be (Grossman 132-33). Jesus, on the other hand, refutes Satan because He trusts God’s plan for his future. He rejects the but-yet-nots of a fallen consciousness with a not-but that delivers truth, “I am,” thereby exposing Satan’s alternatives for the fabrications that they are. This is one way the narrator fulfills his own promises that will see Satan “foiled / In all his wiles” (1.5-6).

In book 3, Satan will encourage Jesus again to think about time subjectively. He says that “‘Zeal and Duty are not slow’”—in other words, to properly fulfill His role, the Son should act out of synch with providential time. Jesus will “‘best fullfil, best verify / The Prophets old, who sung . . . [His] endless reign’” if He begins it “‘sooner’”: Satan then says, “‘Reign then; what canst thou better do the while?’” (3.177-180). Satan uses the simple future and past “shalt” and “sung,” and no conditionals are present. Nevertheless, he veils the alternative he offers using repetition, a pause, negation, and a
question. Satan points out the “while” of Jesus’s now is a gap in which he must act (a wily move). If there is a better option than God’s appointed time, the Son should take a step to make it happen. Jesus opposes Satan’s viewpoint with a near-chiasmus: “‘All things are best fulfilled in their due time, / And time there is for all things’” (3.182-83). The subjects in each clause, “things” and “time,” exchange places. In the first clause “time” is the object of the prepositional phrase, but in the second, it is the main subject. With the phrase “In . . . due time,” Jesus expresses faith in providence, and with “for all things,” He expresses a hope for the future in which God holds all possibilities. Jesus places His trust in God: “‘The Father in his purpose hath decreed, / He in whose hand all times and seasons roll’” (3.186-187). Certain and unmoved, Jesus withstands the temptation to seize the present moment, promote Himself, and acting outside of God’s providential plan. He is able to do so because He is certain of God. Jesus, then, is a paradigm for considering His perspective, historical time, and position in terms of providence; this is what Satan cannot do. Satan can only respond with silence: “. . . and here again / Satan had not to answer, but stood struck / With guilt of his own sin” (3.145-147).

Book 4, like book 2, opens with another literal pause in the narrative, and the suspension highlights Satan’s subjective temporal experience. Although his expectations are continually disappointed, he is still intent on swaying Jesus from obedience. The sentence spans 24 lines, and the first 9 end in a colon,

Perplexed and troubled at his bad success

The Tempter stood, nor had what to reply,

Discovered in his fraud, thrown from his hope,
So oft, and the persuasive Rhetoric
That sleeked his tongue, and won so much on Eve,
So little here, nay lost; but Eve was Eve,
This far his overmatch, who self-deceived
And rash, beforehand had no better weighed
The strength he was to cope with, or his own . . . (4.1-9, my emphasis)

Suspension of syntax, negation, enjambment, colons and semicolons stall our progress through this passage, and represent Satan’s action by what it is not. As in earlier moments, the main subject and verb do not appear in the first line. After learning that the fiend is “perplexed and troubled,” we anticipate the action he might take, but he only stands at a loss for words—he “nor had what to reply” (2). Similarly, the lines portray his actions in terms of what he hasn’t done. Although he succeeded with Eve, “So little here, nay lost” and he “had no better weighed / The strength he was to cope with” (6, 8-9, emphasis added). The negations in this passage fit with previous descriptions of Satan’s point of view. He has framed his future by negating it; this passage goes one step further by detailing his present condition as the absence of words, the non-attainment of destruction, and the lack of common sense. Notwithstanding the fall, the objectives Satan anticipates are continually unrealized, and the phrasing here helps us to experience the rhythm of those disappointments, because our forward movement is stalled.

Near the close of book 4, Satan questions the role he has pictured himself in when he remembers witnessing Jesus’s baptism. Satan reads the event solely from his own perspective:
‘Thenceforth I thought thee worth my nearer view
And narrower Scrutiny, that I might learn
In what degree or meaning thou art called
The Son of God, which bears no single sense;
The Son of God I also am, or was,
And if I was, I am; relation stands;
All men are Sons of God; yet thee I thought
In some respect far higher so declared.’ (4.514-521)

Satan hopes to understand how Jesus is the Son of God, but he rejects the very idea that the title has one specific definition. By denying that only Jesus is God’s Son, Satan opens up the possibility that he too might have such a role. He asserts his own position in relation to God with a near-chiasmus: “The Son of God I also am, or was, / And if I was, I am’” (4.517-518). Jesus has used the words “I am,”’ and in another instance, a chiasmus, to remind Satan that He, Jesus, is God’s Son. Try as he might to imitate Jesus’s style, Satan doesn’t quite get it right. Satan begins to use the phrase “I am” before implying he might have held the role in the past—“or was.” In the first part of the clause, Satan expresses near-certainty by using the present tense that Jesus has used (“I also am, or was,” 4.518), exaggerating the role he once had, but the “or” introduces an alternative to what he has professed to be true. Likewise, the hypothetical “if I was” calls into question his perception. Satan’s logic here—“if I was . . . yet thee I thought”—aligns with earlier moments in Paradise Lost, in which the “if . . . but” patterns in his language illustrate his “illusions of omnipotence” and “profligate fancy” (Grossman 132-33). With the hypothetical “if,” Satan imagines the possibility that his once-obedient role could
make him equal to Jesus—that his “relation stands,” even if he has fallen from a right standing with God. Because the position he describes depends entirely upon an “if” of his own invention, Satan throws doubt on what he hopes might be true. His impossible fiction—that “relation stands”—foreshadows his next move, to test Jesus’s power by placing him on the pinnacle of the temple and asking him to “stand” (549-550).

During Satan’s final attempt, he invents an alternative action that Jesus might choose, and he uses suspension to call Jesus’s power into question. Satan instructs the Son,

‘There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright
Will ask thee skill; I to thy Fathers house
Have brought thee, and highest placed; highest is best;
Now shew thy Progeny; if not to stand,
Cast thy self down; safely if Son of God:
For it is written, He will give command
Concerning thee to his Angels, in their hands
They shall up lift thee, lest at any time
Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone,’
To whom thus Jesus: ‘Also it is written,
Tempt not the Lord thy God,’ he said and stood. (4.551-561)

Pauses abound in this passage: hypothetical wording, negation, and repetition hold us here, just as Satan suspends Jesus above Jerusalem. With “if” clauses, Satan questions Jesus’s physical and spiritual ability to stand and obey God. Compelling Jesus to ignore God’s providence, Satan insists, “‘Now show thy progeny’” (554). By heightening the
import of “now,” Satan is overvaluing the present and hoping Jesus will do the same. He assumes that Jesus won’t be able to trust or attend to His Father’s timing: “‘if not to stand / Cast thy self down’” (4.554-555). The negation and hypothetical cause the proposed action to sound like a possibility—Satan seems to say, if Jesus doesn’t want to stand, he should throw himself down. Wording it in this way casts doubt on Jesus’s willingness to remain in obedience. Because Satan’s “if not” diverges from Luke’s account, Milton alters the Biblical reference. In Luke’s gospel, Satan says, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence” (4.9). Satan’s last “if” phrase—“If Son of God”—implies what he detests most about Jesus, His relationship to God. Like “if not to stand,” “If Son of God” suggests that Jesus will best show his Sonship by acting of his own accord. In contrast to Satan’s suspensions, Jesus’s response is direct. Milton uses synchronicity: “said and stood” are parallel, for the two verbs communicate the harmony between Jesus’s words and his physical action.

Spenser’s Pauses and Milton’s Subjectivity

After this moment, Milton delays the end of book 4 with three significant passages of suspension, Satan’s fall, Jesus’s repast and repose, and the angels’ song. Each passage will reflect that Milton had in mind Spenser’s conflict between Arthur and Maleger (II.xi), and each passage will represent to us both how Satan sees and what he fails to see. In depicting Arthur, Spenser is concerned with temporal categories important to Milton’s Paradise Regained: history, providence, and one’s subjective experience of (and in) time. The Arthur and Maleger episode follows canto x, in which Spenser delays our forward movement with a key narrative pause. There, Arthur sojourns in the house of
Alma, where he reads the historical account. Confronted with history, Arthur begins to consider his place and purpose in it and to look forward to who he might become. Once Arthur reaches the history of his father in the book, the text ends without warning: this is a surprise to him and to us. Although Arthur doesn’t know that he is reading of his own lineage, we recognize that he is reading his own story, and that the historical account has caught up to the present day. The author of Britain’s history cannot continue because Arthur’s story would be next, but Arthur has not accomplished all he will do. Because the text abruptly ends, Arthur cannot speak: “And wonder of antiquity long stopt his speech” (II.x.68). This rupture renders Arthur silent. His pause makes us aware of his perspective on history, and in that way, Spenser brings together historical time and Arthur’s subjective experience.

If canto x illuminates that Arthur’s experience is both historical and subjective, in canto xi, Arthur will model one key challenge Christians face in diurnal time until the apocalypse. As readers of Spenser’s poem know, Arthur represents Christ, but canto xi will complicate that by revealing his likeness to humankind. In her analysis of Spenser’s Arthur and Maleger episode, Judith Anderson observes,

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106 Another point of contrast is that after Arthur and Guyon read the history of Britain in the house of Alma, what they have read captivates them so much so that Alma must remind them to stop reading, because “their supper did them long awaite,” II.x.77.7. Although this pause is less significant to the narrative, one delay important to the plot of Paradise Regained is that Jesus has been waiting to eat for a long time in the wilderness. 107 Arthur’s present actions will determine the future of England, he can be compared to Jesus in Paradise Regained, whose actions are decisive for humankind’s relationship with God. 108 In Milton, after Jesus confronts Satan with the meaning of true kingship and the reality of His revelation in time, Satan becomes mute. Confronted by what Jesus will accomplish in historical time but has not done yet, it is Satan who cannot speak. Because Milton underlines Satan’s perspective, he distances us from Jesus and closes the gap between us and Satan’s fallen experience in time. It dramatizes Jesus’s power in historical time, but it also makes him feel further away from us.
Arthur’s battle [with Maleger] more closely enacts the anguish of Paul’s epistles than Jesus’s triumphant revivification of humankind. At the same time, however, Arthur, as a redeemed Adam, is Christlike, sharing in Jesus’s death, burial and mortification of the flesh and thereby dying to sin, a process, in Calvin’s words, that ‘we pursue day by day and which will . . . be accomplished [only] when we pass from this life.’ (Anderson 25). Anderson draws attention to Arthur’s dual qualities, but for her, Arthur’s battle with Maleger illustrates the daily struggle of every Christian—“dying to sin.” As a liminal figure—standing on the line between God and man—Arthur can be understood as a reference point for Milton’s portrayal of the Son in Paradise Regained. Christopher Bond closely reads the similarities between Arthur and the Son: “The story of Arthur, partially told, or at least anticipated, in what we have of Spenser’s poem, is that of a young prince learning, like Milton’s Jesus, about his role and identity” (194). Indeed, Spenser’s Book II particularly portrays Arthur as significant to history. It also will represent what Arthur’s experience of living with the flesh (and dying to it) feels like, because Arthur (and each Christian), must wrestle with the flesh until their death or the apocalypse.

Milton’s recourse to Spenser becomes even more telling if we look at Spenser’s penultimate canto, where Arthur’s subjectivity is crucially emphasized. Milton will recast Spenser’s formal choices, use of perspective, delays, and an allusion to highlight not solely who Jesus is but, critically, how Satan thinks. At the heart of Canto xi are two

109 While these similes suggest Milton places Jesus in conversation with Spenser’s Arthur, according to Bond, Milton also distinguishes Jesus from Arthur: Jesus will not enter into war against Rome. What Bond fails to account for is why Milton echoes Spenser’s specific narrative as well as formal choices. Spenser employs several decisive pauses in Book II, cantos x and xi, and Milton reshapes these pauses in order that we might read the end of Paradise Regained in light of the Arthur and Maleger episode.
events: the attack on Alma’s house by Maleger and his forces, and Arthur and Maleger’s battle with one another. Offering to defend Alma, Arthur first attacks Maleger with a spear; Maleger fires arrows at him, so Arthur must stop to avoid being hit. Yet the more Arthur “relent[s] his pace,” the more his foe follows him (27.3). Arthur then considers he should “follow him no more / but keepe his standing” for a time (27.6) This is only one of Arthur’s pauses, and Spenser calls attention to it with negations. While the battle moves forward, it becomes increasingly futile: Arthur strikes his adversary to the ground with his mace, a stone, and his sword, but none of these weapons succeed in killing Maleger, who continues rising up after he falls down (34.8, 36.1-2, 37.3-4). Next, Arthur uses his sword to pierce his enemy, striking him so “That halfe the steele behind his backe did rest” (37.5). But Arthur’s expectations are disappointed:

Which drawing backe, he looked evermore
When the hart blood should gush out of his chest,
Or his dead corse should fall upon the flore;
But his dead corse upon the flore fell nathemore. (37.6-9, my emphasis)

Spenser’s “evermore” and “nathemore” underline that what Arthur continually hopes for most certainly doesn’t happen. Arthur (and we) can’t yet understand why Maleger won’t die. To further this confusion, the pronouns “he” and “his” are not clearly defined—whether Maleger or Arthur is bleeding or not falling, it’s hard to tell. We enter Arthur’s perspective: he is “Halfe in amaze with horror hideous, / And halfe in rage, to be deluded thus,” because “ne drop of blood appeared shed to bee” (38.4-5, 38.1). Arthur’s senses are suspended precisely because he can’t make sense of who his opponent is—he “ne wist what to say, ne what to do at all” (39.3-4)—and he becomes lost in the possibilities
of who he might be (39.5-9). At this moment, Arthur does not know how to act, so he stops once again. Spenser illustrates Arthur’s shock with a pause:

   A while he stood in this astonishment,
   Yet would he not for all his great dismay
   Give over to effect his first intent,
   And th’utmost means of victory assay,
   Or th’utmost yssew of his owne decay. (41.1-5, emphasis mine)

Arthur’s non-action resembles Satan’s pause at the opening of book 3, when he “stood / Awhile as mute confounded what to say” (Paradise Regained 3.1-2). Milton completes the line with “say,” which nicely fits with Spenser’s “dismay,” “assay,” and “decay,” as if he is anticipating Spenser’s rhymes. Indeed, what Arthur feels in this moment sounds much like Satan’s pause in book 4, too: despite his momentary silence, Milton’s Satan “gives not o’re though desperate of success” (4.23). That Milton chooses to echo Arthur’s stops in Satan’s pauses enlarges our vision of Satan, who like Arthur, is “deluded” by what he sees and imagines.

   During the key moment of the contest, Spenser once again uses negation and a pause to underscore Arthur’s viewpoint of the scene. Disarming himself of sword and shield, Arthur strangles Maleger, only to watch him uprise and let out “against his mother earth a gronefull sownd” (42.8-9). Spenser stresses that Arthur’s expectations have been surprised: no sooner had he “thought . . . all peril sure was past” that he “thought his labor lost” (43.6, 44.2, my emphasis). But as Maleger stands up from the earth one final

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110 One might compare the sound of the fall in Paradise Lost to the sound Maleger makes when he falls. After Eve gives Adam the fruit to eat and he partakes, we read, “Earth trembled from her entrails, as again / In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan,” 9.1000-1001.
time, it is “whiles he [Arthur] marueild still” that he realizes what to do next (44.8-9, 44.5):

He then remembred well, that had bene sayd,

How th’Earth his mother was, and first him bore,

Shee eke so often, as his life decayd,

Did life with usury to him restore,

And reysd him up much stronger than before,

So soone as he unto her wombe did fall;

Therefore to grownd he would him cast no more,

Ne him committ to grave terrestriall,

But beare him farre from hope of succour usuall. (II.xi.45, my emphasis)

To understand what he must do, Arthur must first see what he should no longer do. His knowledge of who Maleger is—and who he is not—allows him to gain power over his enemy. David Lee Miller explains what Arthur will come to know: that “Maleger’s strength is nothing but Arthur’s infirmity, his body a mere fiction; he is the flesh with which the spirit must wrestle” (393). Still, Arthur’s reading of the scene is only partial: “Arthur’s insight does not quite break the surface of the fiction. It is mediated by the myth of Antaeus, commonly interpreted in Medieval and Renaissance texts as Hercules’ victory over the lusts of the flesh: Arthur decodes Maleger by remembering ‘how th’Earth his mother was’” (Miller 393). The myth of Antaeus—which Milton will use in Book 4’s depiction of Satan’s fall—allows Arthur the ability to know his enemy for himself. But we are the ones who must participate in reading the scene and making this connection:
If Arthur were to carry out the interpretation I have sketched, he would approach that horizon, a knowledge of himself as both victim and adversary, identified at one and the same time with Maleger and with the castle under siege. This recognition hovers just out of reach, veiled by the allusion to Antaeus and calling upon us to finish the interpretation—to identify with Arthur, and through him to recognize ourselves in the narrative. (Miller 393-394).

If Spenser prompts us to decipher Arthur’s situation, that it is the flesh he struggles with—his own flesh—Milton’s allusion to this struggle in the key scene of *Paradise Regained* will also ask us to see ourselves in Satan’s fallen point of view, and to recognize his perspective as nothing but our own weakness.

At the end of Arthur’s episode, he hopes to disarm his enemy for good, and his action is typological. Arthur carries Maleger to a “standing” lake and casts him in:

> Upon his shoulders carried him perforse
> Above three furlongs, taking his full course,
> Untill he came unto a standing lake;
> Him thereinto he threw without remorse . . . (46.4-7)

This action stands between temporal categories, because it is an event that adumbrates the apocalypse and recalls a previous baptism in the poem. Anderson says, “It is particularly significant that Maleger’s body should be carried beyond the length of a dragon’s tail—that is, three furlongs, as in Book I, Canto xi.11—and then finally buried from sight in stagnant (“standing”) water” (25). By referring to Canto 1, during which Redcrosse fortunately falls into a “springing well” (29.3) that exemplifies baptism, Spenser asks us to consider how the first scene elucidates Arthur’s casting of Maleger into the lake.
Anderson makes clear that the two moments contrast one another: “The waters of I and II inversely mirror each other: redemptive, revivifying, life giving in Book I and standing, lifeless, dead and deadening, and indeed . . . mortifying in Book II” (25). Arthur strives to baptize his own flesh, but it’s a baptism that he effects, not God. David Lee Miller describes the sacrament’s symbolic value in book II, where Spenser’s Guyon improperly reacts to the baptism he sees in the Mortdant and Amavia episode. Miller highlights baptism’s significance for Christians:

He [Paul] goes on to explain that believers become ‘dead to sinne’ through baptism: ‘Know ye not, that all we which haue bene baptized into Christ Jesus, haue bene baptized into his death?’ (6.3). ‘Grafted’ with Jesus ‘to the similitude of his death,’ the faithful await the completion of this similitude: ‘we beleue that we shal liue also with him’ (6.5, 8). (Miller 379)

Because it signifies believers’ death to the flesh and what they hope to gain in eternity, baptism helps Christians to understand their present condition and future glory. As such, the sacrament reminds them of their position in linear history from God’s perspective. Now “dead” to the flesh, they can anticipate life with Him forever. Arthur’s self-baptism aligns with Guyon’s earlier incorrect reading of baptism, because Guyon misunderstands its significance (Miller 379-380). Just as Arthur’s memory of the myth is our cue to intuit its meaning, Milton’s Spenserian allusions will encourage us to read Satan’s fall (as well as the opening of Paradise Regained) in light of Spenser’s episode. We must call to mind that Milton’s poem opens with a baptism that Satan has both interrupted and failed to correctly interpret. Satan’s suspension at the outset is a model for the fallen point of view we encounter throughout Milton’s poem. By re-fashioning Spenser’s pauses, allusion to
Antaeus, and Arthur’s self-baptism, Milton invites us to remember Satan’s position at the beginning of the poem, as well as to see that at the close, nothing for him is changed. Perhaps we have experienced new vision, though, as we recognize Satan’s point for view for what it is.

During Satan’s fall in *Paradise Regained*, Milton’s formal choices reflect Spenser’s form and pauses during Arthur’s conflict with Maleger. Like Spenser, Milton will present Satan’s pause as subjective and connected to the myth of Antaeus.111 We experience the scene from Satan’s point of view:

But Satan smitten with amazement fell
As when Earths Son Antaeus (to compare
Small things with greatest) in Irassa strove
With Joves Alcides and oft foiled still rose,
Receiving from his mother Earth new strength,
Fresh from his fall, and fiercer grapple joined,
Throttled at length in the air, expired and fell;
So after many a foil the Tempter proud,
Renewing fresh assaults, amidst his pride
Fell whence he stood to see his Victor fall. (4.562-568)

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At the end of the first line, enjambment stops us between Satan’s literal fall and Milton’s epic simile, the allusion to Antaeus.\textsuperscript{112} Next, the parenthetical phrase cuts in to the allusion, and we return to the myth’s scene, “In Irassa strove / With Joves Alcides . . .” (4.564-65). Our progress is further interrupted when we work through the repetition: Antaeus “rose . . . fresh from his fall . . . and fell” (4.564-68). Satan’s fall is one event in line 1—or perhaps he falls more than once, the simile suggests. If Satan, like Antaeus, ascends as he descends, his motion reflects his fallen perspective that confuses what could happen for what is happening. If he is like Antaeus, whom Hercules lifts and pushes down multiple times, then we are asked to imagine what is arising in Satan before he plunges down to earth. Because the subject, “Tempter” is separated from “fell” in line 571 (4.569-571), the separation informs us what we already know, but with a delay between the subject and action. Satan is descending; \textit{then}, our expectations are disrupted—“he stood to see his Victor fall” (4.568). This final line would not have surprised us if it were placed first, before the fall. This last line throws \textit{us} because of the temporal shift it suggests. Satan stands in order to watch Jesus fall, yet he doesn’t yet know that his opponent \textit{is} a victor and therefore will not fall. His anticipation is ironically undermined by the folding of his anticipation back into the moment of its undoing. Antaeus’s defeat reminds us that although Satan is fallen, with no prospect of victory, he

\textsuperscript{112} Eric Song comments on the significance of this allusion in Milton, who also references Hercules in the Nativity Ode and his last sonnet. Song writes, “To prove himself the one greater Hercules, Jesus must fully conjoin the divine nature of his Father and the human nature of his mother. According to Ovid, Hercules does not suffer from the fires of the underworld upon his death, ‘save in the part his mother gave him’; only the part he inherits from Jove remains invulnerable. In \textit{De Doctrina}, Milton complicates or even contradicts his anti-Trinitarian logic (based on the conviction that a single God could not be plural in person) by describing ‘the union of two natures in Christ’ (\textit{CPW} 6:423). Like Hercules, Jesus is the son of God and man, but unlike the pagan hero, Jesus should not be divisible into discrete parts,” p. 126.
wavering between imagining his victory only to be reminded of its impossibility. Suspension draws us in to what he was thinking before this fall, and the other one—the first moment of linear history, where he “stood” on the edge of Chaos. We may witness Satan’s subjectivity and eternal punishment all at once, as he falls in the moment, but Milton suggests Satan will always be falling throughout eternity because of his broken relationship with God.

Milton’s allusion to Spenser’s Maleger episode resonates even more in light of recent criticism, which argues for the effect of Milton’s reference to Antaeus. Solely examining Milton’s text, Maggie Kilgour explains how Hercules and Antaeus might be seen as parallel, rather than distinct, figures: “Milton’s specific allusion to the battle between Antaeus and Hercules recalls this doubling between hero and monster. While Revard argues that the conflict . . . was often viewed as a kind of David and Goliath struggle between unequal forces, more often the two combatants are represented as equals” (89). She continues, “In his description of the episode in Pharsalia, book 4, Lucan describes the two as ‘pares,’ alike . . . Milton has chosen a conflict that suggests not the difference between good and evil but their similarity. At the very moment in the poem that Milton represents the separation of good from evil, he recalls a hero who confuses the two” (Kilgour 89-90). For Kilgour, the classical tradition clouds the waters so that Satan and Jesus are less discernable from one another. Her analysis prompts us to consider why Milton would want Satan and Jesus to appear less, rather than more, disparate.

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113 We may witness Satan’s subjectivity and eternal punishment all at once, as he falls in the moment, but Milton suggests Satan will always be falling throughout eternity because of his broken relationship with God.
Milton’s use of Spenser helps us to understand the reason, at this point of the poem, for such a resemblance. The critical takeaway from Spenser’s episode is that Arthur confronts a double of himself—the flesh inside him—and fails to see it for what it is; Spenser invokes Antaeus to clearly point us in the right direction. There is one key difference between Spenser’s and Milton’s references. In Milton, because the allusion occurs as a description of Satan’s fall, the passage primarily highlights Satan’s point of view: the last line upholds his expectation to see Jesus fall (4.568). Who’s to say that, here, Antaeus is to Satan as Hercules is to Jesus? If the reference to Antaeus is primarily about the Son, it might have reflected the Son’s superior power; yet the epic simile underscores Antaeus’s role. A picture of the Son as a powerful Hercules is precisely what we don’t see. Instead, Satan is front and center in our field of vision. Milton’s use of the epic simile asks us to consider what it might not be doing.

This approach fits with Milton’s thinking about the nature of sin. In a passage from *On Christian Doctrine*, Milton defines sin by what it is not: “It is called ‘actual’ not because sin is really an action, on the contrary it is a deficiency, but because it usually exists in some action. For every action is intrinsically good; it is only its misdirection or deviation from the set course of law which can properly be called evil. So action is not the material out of which sin is made, but only the . . . essence or element in which it exists” (1240). The allusion to Hercules may confuse us until we realize that the ambiguity we see is, as Milton puts it, a “misdirection” of truth. We’ve missed it because we’ve grown accustomed to Satan’s subjective experience in time. This is what we have seen all along in moments of Satanic subjectivity: a reading of reality that subtracts God’s perspective, or creates a different story before negating it altogether. Milton’s reference
to the Antaeus myth is a warning that we should not, as Satan does, perceive good and evil as one and the same. This moment encourages us to discern Satan’s point of view for what it is, just as Spenser has similarly asked us to see the truth, that Arthur struggles against his own flesh. Milton has famously described that we can know good by evil:

> It was from out the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say of knowing good by evil. As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian.

Milton’s portrayal of good and evil as “twins” aligns with Kilgour’s analysis of the Antaeus and Hercules simile, wherein she finds it is not easy to distinguish the hero from the foe. Because of Milton’s suspension, use of Spenser, and allusion to Antaeus, we can begin to recognize the defects in Satan’s subjectivity for what they are.

To illustrate another moment when it is difficult to distinguish Satan from Jesus, Kilgour closely examines the sentence that follows Satan’s fall:

> So Satan fell and strait a fiery Globe
> Of Angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
> Who on their plumy Vans received him soft
> From his uneasy station, and upbore
> As on a floating couch through the blithe Air. (4.581-585)
She points out we might misread these lines because of Milton’s formal choices: “As many critics have noted, moreover, the ‘him’ in line 583 logically refers to the Son, [and] it syntactically looks back to Satan: at one level the good and bad sons are differentiated; at another they are identified. Like Hercules and Oedipus, the passage both divides and confuses good and evil; Milton stresses likeness at the crucial moment of differentiation” (96-97). This moment once again opens up Satan’s perspective to us. Although it is Jesus whom the angels glide to the valley, Milton creates the possibility that we will miss the one who is uplifted. The potential that we may not recognize Jesus for who he is a concern we have been confronted with at the beginning of the poem, in the description of Jesus at his baptism as “unmarked, unknown” (1.25). We have experienced a comparable lack of recognition in Spenser’s episode, when it is difficult for us to discern who is striking whom because Arthur doesn’t recognize his foe. Likewise, now, we might fail to distinguish the hero from the fiend. Although we have come to expect the interruption of our reading, this passage doesn’t portray Satan, but rather shows us Christ.

This description of Jesus as he ascends may also hold greater significance, for it helps us to imagine who he is not. In the end of *Paradise Regained*, Jesus appears like the great Hercules we did not see in the simile, and the counterpoint to Orpheus, who has not appeared in this poem. Kilgour notices that Hercules is a type of Orpheus—one who conquers death:

Critics have long noted Milton’s interest in the figure of Orpheus, whose failed resurrection of Eurydice made him an inferior type for Jesus. As someone who also goes down to hell and back, Hercules is linked to Orpheus in Euripides’s *Alcestis* (358, 972), Seneca’s *Hercules furens* (569–91), and *Hercules
Oetaeus (1031–1101). Like Jesus later, moreover, Hercules is seen as achieving what Orpheus was unable to do. His conquest of death is fulfilled when he ascends to the stars to become a god. (Kilgour 84)

When Jesus ascends on the wings of angels, he “floats,” a word Milton uses to characterize Lycidas’s watery death: “he must not flote upon his watry bear / Unwept, and welter to the parching wind, / Without the meed of som melodious tear” (10-12). In the poem, Milton’s Orpheus, like Lycidas, moves “down the stream . . . down the swift Hebrus” with no one to lift him up or out of the water and no one to counteract the force of these elements. Milton’s Orpheus neither ascends to heaven, nor does his voice ring out in his death (“Lycidas,” 58-63). Jesus’s ascension with the angels at the end of the poem shows that whether in water or by air or on the earth, God has power over all. Here, Milton is asking us to see what providence can do to stop the forces of nature, historical time, and Satanic subjectivity. After Jesus is uplifted, the angels’ song assures us—with negation—that Satan has lost all power: “He never more henceforth will dare set foot / In Paradise to tempt” (4.610-611, emphasis mine). Paradoxically reversing Lycidas’s (and Orpheus’s) fate, Jesus will overpower fallen angels with his “voice,” and they will drown:

‘. . . hereafter learn with awe

To dread the Son of God: he all unarmed

Shall chase thee with the terror of his voice

From thy demoniac holds, possession foul,

Thee and thy Legions; yelling they shall fly,

And beg to hide them in a herd of swine,
Lest he command them down into the deep,

Bound, and to torment sent before their time.’ (4.625-632)\(^{114}\)

Lycidas drowns in the “remorseless deep,” but the Son has the ability to submerge the fallen angels “down in the deep” (50, 4.631), even if he will wait to do so until the end of time. Too, Jesus displays his power “unarmed”: whereas Orpheus is dismembered after the Bacchantes drown out his voice, Jesus, “unarmed,” speaks and destroys the fallen devils. He accomplishes for all of time what Arthur struggles to do.

While Milton’s angels forecast the Son’s power in their song, *Paradise Regained* ultimately ends with Jesus’s journey back to Mary’s house; I would suggest this is one more nod to Spenser’s canto xi. In Milton’s final lines, we read, “hee unobserved / Home to his Mothers house private returned” (4.638-639). Following Arthur’s battle with his flesh, the squire leads him

Where many Groomes and Squyres ready were,

To take him from his steed full tenderly,

And eke the fayrest Alma mett him there

With balme and wine and costly spicery,

To comfort him in his infirmity;

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\(^{114}\) Here, Milton is referencing Mark 5, where Jesus heals a man who is possessed. After the spirits leave him, they ask to enter the swine: “And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. Then the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (and there were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea,” Mark 5.12-13, KJV. In choosing this Biblical reference, Milton would have had in mind Spenser’s use of this verse in *The Faerie Queene* II.xi.47.6, where one Hag who follows Maleger throws herself into a lake that recalls the pool of Gadaris. The Geneva gloss, which Spenser would have been familiar with, sheds light on this pool of water: “Strabo in the sixteenth book saith that in Gadaris there is a standing pool of very naughty water, which if beasts taste of, they shed their hair, nails, or hooves and horns” (my emphasis).
Eftesoones shee causd him up to be convayd,
And of his armes despoyled easily,
In sumptuons bed shee made him to be layd,
And al the while his wounds were dressing, by him stayd. (49.1-9)

Since Arthur’s conflict renders him weak, Alma remains with him as he heals. Just as
Arthur is cared for “full tenderly,” raised “up,” stripped of his arms and made lie down,
Jesus’s angels “received him soft,” “upbore” him, and “in a flow’ry valley set him down”
(4.483-84). Like Arthur, Jesus will be raised up again, too, only later on the cross, when
soldiers will strip him of his clothing.115 He receives food and drink in the valley, but
Jesus will thirst again, during the crucifixion: “And one ran, and filled a sponge full of
vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him [Jesus] to drink, saying, Let him alone: let us
see whether Elias will come, and take him down” (Mark 15.36). Alma sees to it that
Arthur lies down, and like Arthur, Jesus is placed in the grave. Pilate gives Jesus’s body
to Joseph, who “bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and
laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of
the sepulcher. And Mary Magdalene, and Mary Jesus’s mother, beheld where he was
laid” (Mark 15.46-47). Alma is ready to offer healing to Arthur with “balme and wine

115 See Mark 15.24, where the soldiers “parted his garments” among them.
and costly spicery / To comfort him in his infirmity,” just as Mary and Mary Magdalene expect to anoint Christ’s body: “And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Some, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him” (Mark 16.1). Arthur’s return to Alma’s house suggests a return to earth, his flesh; Jesus will die for humankind’s sin and will not be buried in an earthly grave but will rise again. In the Biblical story, Mary and Mary Magdalene are surprised not to find Him there: “And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher: for they trembled, and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man” (Mark 16.8). Their wonder at Christ’s absence contrasts that of Arthur, who is “halfe in amaze” from his flesh, the disciples, whose joy becomes “new / amaze” when Jesus disappears, and Satan, who “with amazement fell” (2.38, 4.562).

In Paradise Regained, Milton employs suspension and synchronicity to detail Satan’s subjectivity and the Son’s purpose in historical and providential time. Milton uses suspension to new ends by drawing on Spenser’s Maleger episode, which helps us to understand Satan’s inability to recognize his limited point of view or to turn from it. By ending with a reference to Jesus’s return to Mary’s house, Milton encourages us to remember Spenser’s episode and to put it into conversation with pinnacle scene and the Biblical text. In doing so, we see what Arthur realizes, what Satan fails to accept, and what the Son will be able to do, in God’s good time.
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