

Paradise Lost, an epic poem written by John Milton, was first published in 1667 during the Restoration era in England. The poem explores the Biblical narrative of the fall of man, depicting Lucifer's rebellion and the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience. It remains a classical work that engages with themes of free will, temptation, and the human condition, providing a profound examination of the eternal struggle between good and evil. In this research paper, we shall dig deep into Satan's soliloquy in Book IV.

In Book IV's opening, we see that there is a brief introduction to the setting. It unfolds in Hell, illustrating external chaos and internal turmoil within Satan. His descent toward Eden is portrayed as revenge against innocent mankind. As Satan moves, his awakening conscience shows despair, reflecting on memories of his angelic past, fallen present, and anticipated suffering. These lines serve as an introduction to an impending soliloquy, by Satan. The alternating contemplation between the beauty of Eden and the heavenly heights adds depth to Satan's reflections on his fallen state and the stark contrast between Heaven's beauty and Hell's desolation.

From line 35, we see the inner workings of Satan's mind. This serves as a soliloquy, akin to Shakespearean dramas. Milton employs this technique to unveil Satan's inner turmoil and motivations authentically.

In the opening lines, Satan addresses the Sun, acknowledging its unmatched glory, likening it to the God of the new world. Yet, there's contempt in his voice as he expresses his hatred for the Sun's beams, reminders of his glorious past above the celestial sphere. We see his recollection of the once exalted position that he held in Heaven, before Pride and Ambition brought about his downfall in the lines "Till Pride and worse Ambition threw me down" (IV, 40)

Further, Satan shows signs of regret about his rebellion against Heaven's unmatched King (God) and wonders why he, who was created by God, chose to rebel. Satan goes into a state of self questioning when he thinks of why he turned against God's service. He realizes his "pride" led him to scorn "submission", thinking that climbing even higher in the hierarchy was better. Satan contemplates how he aimed to surpass his already high status, thinking it would free him from owing endless gratitude to God.

However, he fails to realize that a thankful mind towards God doesn't accumulate debt, it simultaneously owes and repays. Satan wishes destiny had made him a "lesser angel" sparing him with the unending ambitions that brought misery. He sees that other great powers resisted temptation and stayed loyal which makes him question himself again. He addresses the Sun, he suggests that if the Sun had the same free will, it might have fallen too. He then changes his perspective and goes into a state of accusation where he accuses Heaven of equal love, saying it's cursed because it is the reason for eternal suffering, be it love or hate.

In the lines "Me miserable! which way shall I flie" (IV, 73), we see Satan toiling with the question of how to escape infinite wrath and despair. Satan sees Hell everywhere he goes, and finally realizes he embodies Hell when he says "my self am Hell" (IV, 75). He describes a deep abyss below, even more menacing, making his current suffering seem like heaven. He regrets seducing other spirits with false promises of defiance, boasting that he could overcome the Almighty.

He knows he is falling further but takes a perverse joy in being supreme in misery, a result of his ambition. He thinks about repenting but doubts its sincerity. Even if he could regain his former state through divine mercy, he fears relapsing into worse rebellion and downfall. The

wounds of deep hatred, he believes, make genuine reconciliation impossible and could lead to a more severe relapse.

What I find intriguing is that we see some resemblance to the character of "Macbeth" written by Shakespeare and the possible common thread that exists in their exploration of remorse and the desire for redemption. In both works, characters grapple with the consequences of their actions, expressing a yearning for forgiveness. While Satan puzzles around whether or not he should go down the road of repentance, Macbeth wrestles with guilt in Shakespeare's play, and we see that both these narratives touch upon the universal theme of the human struggle for redemption in the face of moral transgressions.

Moving forward, we see that Satan fears seeking repentance might result in a heavier fall, that may purchase him a brief respite but at the cost of a more prolonged suffering. He knows his "punisher", and thus would not grant him mercy. Despairing of hope, Satan sees mankind, God's new delight, replacing the exiled rebels. In the lines "all Good to me is lost; Evil be thou my Good" (IV, 110) Satan is seen finally settling in his own self and accepting the dark side.

In the last few lines of his soliloquy, he declares that he, through embracing evil, holds a divided empire with Heaven's King. He asserts that evil gives him a share of dominion, perhaps even more than half, suggesting that he anticipates a significant rule. Satan hints at exerting influence over humanity, symbolized by the mention of "Man," and he predicts a reign in the new world, signaling his ambition for power and control to return and take over the unfolding events.

This soliloquy provides a profound insight into the complexities of his character. Milton skillfully employs this dramatic monologue to reveal Satan's inner turmoil, motivations, and

unyielding pride. The soliloquy unfolds as a journey through Satan's memories, regrets, and ambitions, showcasing the depth of his rebellion against God and how aware he is of his feelings and the way his mind works. It exposes Satan's complexity as he oscillates between blaming God and acknowledging his rebellion's self-infliction. Despite this realization, he adamantly rejects reconciliation, embracing evil as his new good.

This self-portrait aligns with the modern concept of the anti-hero — an alienated character refusing redemption or societal reintegration, emphasizing Satan's unyielding defiance against God. Despite moments of reflection and even a glimpse of remorse, Satan ultimately clings to his defiance, embracing evil as his path to power and dominion. He ultimately defines himself as Hell, portraying it as a spiritual estrangement from God.

In his paper, “The Humanist Tradition and Milton’s Satan: The Conservative as Revolutionary.”, Wayne Rebhorn mentions briefly why Satan was adamantly rebelling against god.

In defending his rebellion before or after his defeat in Heaven-and Satan is always defending it-he consistently presents it as a rebellion against tyranny, an exaltation of liberty and dignity over base servility, and a heroic struggle against injustice.-" (Rebhorn, 82)

What I believe Rebhorn is trying to point out here is that Satan defends his rebellion as a fight against perceived tyranny in Heaven. He believes it to be a heroic struggle for freedom and dignity. And this perspective remains consistent in his soliloquy, highlighting his defiance and commitment to these ideals even after his defeat, emphasizing his enduring role as a rebel against what he considers unjust authority.

In a paper by George M Muldrow he highlights the profound self-awareness that Satan shows and has in the poem.

Satan himself seems to be aware of its utter loss through his spiritual death, and to acknowledge that his envy and spite and his constant recommitment to evil will bring nothing but a bottomless hell of self. (Muldrow, 98)

It is evident that Satan recognizes the spiritual death resulting from his destructive choices and acknowledges that his relentless envy and malice lead to an endless self-inflicted hell. It underscores a tragic aspect of his character – the realization that his commitment to evil only perpetuates his own suffering, but how he still cannot let go of those feelings and how he has accepted this. John Milton's "Paradise Lost" stands as a timeless masterpiece. The soliloquy in Book IV, looks at Satan's introspective journey and provides a nuanced understanding of the character's complexity and the psychological workings behind his defiance.

It serves as a dramatic monologue, unfolding as a journey through Satan's memories, regrets, and ambitions. It becomes a pivotal moment in the poem as Milton skillfully exposes the depth of Satan's rebellion against God, where he juggles between blaming the divine and acknowledging the self-infliction of his rebellion. This internal conflict reveals Satan's complexity as a character refusing redemption and societal reintegration, aligning with the modern concept of the anti-hero. It also gives us the perspective of how his mind works and how his downfall leads to some thoughts of remorse and repentance but how he refuses to let go of his commitment in the end towards the rebellion against his Creator.

Satan in "Paradise Lost" shows human-like feelings in his soliloquy. He struggles inside, blaming God yet knowing his pride caused his fall. This reflects human conflicts and emotions. Satan refuses redemption, like people rejecting change. His choice to embrace evil and resist divine authority mirrors human contradictions. Though a demon, Milton makes Satan relatable with universal themes of rebellion, pride, and the ongoing quest for identity and purpose. In this way, Satan becomes a complex character, echoing human struggles and making the poem more relatable to readers.

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