Back I Turn’d:
Eve and Milton and the Power of Coming Second

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Eve and Milton and the Power of Coming Second

I thither went
With unexperienced thought and laid me down
On the green bank to look into the clear
Smooth lake that to me seemed another sky.
As I bent down to look, just opposite
A shape within the wat’ry gleam appeared
Bending to look on me. I started back,
It started back, but pleased I soon returned,
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love.

- Paradise Lost, IV.456-465

Eve first speaks amidst an idyllic scene in the Garden of Eden, in which she and Adam have finished their evening meal. In their discourse, Eve retells to Adam her earliest memory, in which she awakes and innocently follows a mysterious sound, leading her to her own reflection. After Eve becomes enchanted with her image in the lake, an invisible voice speaks to her, explaining that the mysterious image in the lake is a reflection of her own. The voice directs her instead towards Adam, explaining to Eve that it is Adam “Whose image thou art” (IV.472), promising to her in him a more fulfilling partnership, within which she will “thence be call’d / Mother of human race” (IV.474-475). Eve makes a comparison between her two reflections, finding Adam “less fair, / less winning soft, less amiably mild, / Than that smooth wat’ry image” (IV.478-479), but ultimately returns to him after Adam’s persuasive speech, during which he articulates their inherent reflective similarities, saying to her, “Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim / My other half” (IV.487-488).
This function of mirroring is made possible only through the double nature of Eve's interactions, first with her own reflection, followed by her reflection in Adam. Within the structure of this doubling arises a hierarchical order: although Eve was created second to Adam, her creation story is told first. This inversion of first and second is not limited to Adam and Eve, but is present more broadly in Milton's project as author of a previously written story. Just as Milton endeavors to achieve "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" (I.16) by retelling the story of Genesis, Eve's retelling of her reflective experience goes beyond simply a series of mirrored images, creating in addition a level of agency and re-creation made possible through her secondary nature. In this essay, I will chart the way in which Eve's secondness to Adam is in fact the source of her power. I will do this through an exploration of Milton's use of Ovid's Narcissus myth in Eve's speech in Book IV, noting specifically the use of reflective, echoing language, and then extend that reflective reading to the speeches of Adam and Satan which surround Eve's speech. I will show then how these reflective instances provide her with the tools to choose to enable a male-dominated speaking hierarchy.

As Milton works within the framework of coming second to God, so too do the reflections embedded within Eve's narrative extend beyond Milton's poem to the writings of Ovid. In the myth of Narcissus and Echo, the reader is introduced to "resounding Echo" (III.91), a nymph limited in speaking capacity: "Though talkative, / she used her voice as she still uses it: / of many words her ears have caught, she just / repeats the final part of what she has heard" (III.91). Just as an echo is the aural equivalent of a visual reflection, the character of Echo has no agency in her repetition of

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1 All Ovid quotations in this essay come from the Mandelbaum translation.
the sounds that she hears. Echo inherently comes second: that is, she cannot speak until others speak around her, at which point she must repeat the end of the first speaker’s sentence. Her agency is overwhelmingly limited: the narrator continues, “Echo / can mime no more than the concluding sounds / of any words she’s heard” (III.92). While in her interaction with Narcissus, she is often successful in conveying her desired meaning, it is due purely to coincidence, since the ends of Narcissus’s sentences, when separated from the beginning, reflect her sentiment. This coincidental emotional expression through words is present even in their first interaction:

One day, by chance, the boy –
now separated from his faithful friends –
cried out: “Is anyone nearby?” “Nearby,”
was Echo’s answering cry. And, stupefied,
he looks around and shouts: “Come! Come!” – and she calls out, “Come! Come!” to him who’d called. (III.92)

Just as Echo sees Narcissus by chance, so too do her words convey her meaning by the serendipitous out-of-context ending to Narcissus’s calls. Nonetheless, to the reader, and to Narcissus, her desires are articulated through her echoing. The narrator explicitly identifies her emotions as she speaks: “he persists, calls out: / ‘Let’s meet.’ And with the happiest reply / that ever was to leave her lips, she cries: ‘Let’s meet!’” (III.92). Despite this joy in her verbal expression, she is ultimately unable to persuade Narcissus due to her lack of dialogic ability. Once he sees her, he recognizes that he is speaking not to the friends from whom he has been separated: “he / retreats and, fleeting, shouts: ‘Do not touch me! / Don’t cling to me! I’d sooner die than say / I’m yours!'; and Echo answered him: ‘I’m yours’” (III.92-93). Although Echo is emotionally invested in her verbal interaction with Narcissus, it is limited in that her repetition, while coincidentally successful through its partiality, is nonetheless an exact verbal copy. She is not able to re-
create through repetition, but is instead restricted by the spoken words of others. This inability to engage in dialogue leads to a bodiless, cursed existence of a purely echoing voice:

She cannot sleep; she wastes away.
The sap has fled her wrinkled, wretched flesh.

Her voice and bones are all that’s left; and then her voice alone: her bones, they say, were turned to stone. So she is hidden in the woods and never can be seen on mountain slopes, though everywhere she can be heard; the power of sound still lives in her. (III.93)

As Echo is reduced to nothing more than an echoing voice, Narcissus follows after with a similarly degenerative fate. By chance, just as Echo first sees Narcissus, he also first sees himself:

It’s here that, weary from the heat, the chase, drawn by the beauty of the pool, the place, face down, Narcissus lies. But while he tries to quench one thirst, he feels another rise: he drinks, but he is stricken by the sight he sees – the image in the pool.... Unwittingly, he wants himself; he praises, but his praise is for himself; he is the seeker and the sought, the longed-for and the one who longs; he is the arsonist – and is the scorched. (III.93-94)

While Echo is overwhelmingly verbal in her repetition, Narcissus is fixated on the visual. The experience of seeing his reflection is expressed both in plot and in a series of pairs, simultaneously splitting him and doubling him as an actor: he gives and receives praise, he longs and is longed-for, he burns with desire and is burned as recipient of that same desire. It is also a visual experience that leads to his self-recognition: “Yes, yes, I’m he! I’ve seen through that deceit: / my image cannot trick me anymore... What shall I do?
Should I be sought or seek? / But, then, why must I seek?” (III.95-96). His hyper-visual moment of recognition leads both to understanding and to his death. Like Echo, he cannot attain the object of his desires, and though it is a visual and not a verbal reflection that fails him, he is subject to the same fate, and he also wastes away.

Milton’s usage of Ovid’s myth, while easily recognizable, is widely interpreted. Stevie Davies argues, “Hidden beneath the surface of Milton’s adaptation of the Narcissus incident is a myth of descent and rebirth; an allegory of the soul’s final and rapturous union with the Beloved” (13). To Davies, Milton’s project highlights the revelatory conclusion of man and his ultimate union in Christ’s second coming. In the same way, she reads Narcissus as a revelatory character: “In Ovid’s version, it is Narcissus himself who, cursed with self-knowledge and realizing that his love for his reflection is an illusion, fulfills Tiresias’ prediction that he will live to old age only ‘if he ne’er know himself.’ Revelation of the truth is the death of him” (13). In Davies’s argument, while Narcissus’s revelation brings about his death, Eve’s recognition of her own image, and her truer image in Adam, leads instead to the generative future of the human race. By retelling the Narcissus story, “Milton heals the scars of the Narcissus myth… [Narcissus’s] death is painful, protracted and much-mourned. The Christian poet mends the myth. Revelation to Eve is a kind of annunciation. A gentle voice of Divine guidance predicts her fruitful conjunction with Adam as the reality ‘Whose image thou art’” (13). This perhaps traditional reading of the Christian solution to the issue of narcissism fails to recognize nuances in Eve’s agency and power, reducing her instead to simply a Narcissus figure saved from a narcissistic fate.
Mark Edmunson understands Eve’s Narcissus moment as one in which she uses Ovid’s myth for her own agenda: “It is as though Eve’s narration absorbed Ovid’s Echo, using verbal reflection to represent the visual doublings of her form in water. In a passage that will activate tensions between the seen and the spoken, repeated image and unique pronouncement, these lines occupy a richly ambiguous place” (28). Edmunson develops this assumption of verbal power through use of Freudian theory. As Eve develops from Freud’s auto-erotic to narcissistic stages – “In the ‘auto-erotic stage’ the infant takes sexual pleasure from discrete bodily parts; in ‘narcissism’ he has developed an attraction to his entire body conceived for the first time as a totality’ (29) – she passes first through the interim phase of “primary narcissism”: “Thus ‘primary narcissism,’ in the spirit of Eve’s self-infatuation, is self love prior to self-consciousness, or, to put it another way, self-love which, because it is confined within images… cannot name itself” (29). Unlike Davies, Edmunson recognizes the existence of rhetorical repetition, noting, in line 465, that “The interjected word ‘there’ delicately begins to undo Eve’s fascination with pure repeating. The word introduces an element of temporal movement, repetition with difference, to initiate Eve into the limiting rule of time” (29). To Edmunson, this recognition of her orientation within a rhetorical and literal repetition is a sign of her maturity into the Freudian narcissistic phase of development. Once she develops to narcissistic maturity of knowing, and loving, her own image, she becomes oriented in relation to others: “Where the first, maternal scene of genesis had offered her the prospect of being in herself, she is now a being for or being in relation to others” (31). While Edmunson gestures to the presence of rhetorical repetition, his conclusion focuses instead on authority: “This second birth into self awareness presents itself, moreover, as a
Miltonic allegory for the transmission and internalization of authority. In this transmission the subject’s desires undergo a realignment: where there was image there is voice, where there was self there is authoritative other” (31). This voice proposes a Freudian solution to female narcissism:

“The voice at the pool cannily attempts to displace Eve’s love for her own image by promising her generations of offspring: ‘Multitudes like thyself’ (474). Freud offers a comparable path for narcissistic women: In the child which they bear, a part of their own body confronts them like an extraneous object, to which, starting out from their narcissism, they can then give complete object-love” (32).

Ultimately the scene concludes, to Edmunson, by the process of sublimation of Eve’s narcissistic tendencies, redirecting her self-love instead towards Adam.

Neither of these readings recognizes the wider context within which Eve’s speech is situated. Eve is not only a maturing Freudian character or a piece of the salvation puzzle, but her very role as oriented towards Adam is the structure through which she obtains agency. This reading is enhanced when considered in light of Milton’s broader parallel project of retelling. As Maggie Kilgour argues, “As he copies God, Milton also more humbly copies Ovid, an allusive author who throughout his work self-consciously explores the act of creation and origination... Milton suggests the possibility of creative change through art – even in a world fallen from its original state of natural and divine creativity” (311). Milton and Eve work in tandem to build upon previous structural setups in order to establish themselves in an unprecedented place of power and agency.
This potential for creation through copying, however, is in tension with the traditional understanding of woman as second and therefore inferior to man. Eve's creation as second to Adam is established not only in the first book of Genesis, but in fact in the second of the two creation stories. As Patricia Parker notes:

> It is this second creation story in Genesis, in which woman has been seen as coming both out of and after man, which has for centuries authorized woman's place as second place, a coming after, in which priority in the temporal sequence has hierarchical superiority as its con-sequence or result. Woman here is not just after man but of man and for man; her genesis is a following from or sequel to the pronouncement that 'It is not good that the man should be alone.' (179)

Parker argues that, like in the book of Genesis, Milton places Eve as second to Adam as a hierarchical ordering in which man is inherently superior because of his primacy. However, this argument fails to recognize the potential power in coming second. By working within this historical background, Milton emphasizes that very power. Just as Eve comes second to Adam in the creation story, both Milton and Eve use their inherent secondness to recreate, reinterpret, and return. Repetition is powerful, because it holds within itself the potential for adaptation, development and change from the initial action. Throughout Book IV of Paradise Lost, characters continually adapt and change the rhetorical reflections previously used by other characters, asserting their power through the malleability of reflection. Just as Milton comes second to God and is thus able to not only copy him but also adapt and develop his message, so too does Eve use her
secondness to Adam to act as a conduit between God's voice and Adam, behaving
dynamically in a role of returning and reshaping.

Having explored the myth of Narcissus, we now have the tools to return to Eve's
reflective moment. After a cursory look at her surroundings, Eve's first movement is
driven by "a murmuring sound / Of waters" (IV.453-454). In her first words, Eve
combines the sense of Narcissus, the visual, with the sense of Echo, the aural. Once she
establishes this doubled sensory experience, she describes her interaction with her
reflection. In these lines, Eve also uses rhetorical reflection to echo her experience. "I
started back" is followed by "It started back," while "pleas'd I soon return'd" precedes
"Pleas'd it returned as soon" (IV.462-464). Both reflections are separated by a line break,
as if the water, like the end of the line, creates a subtle yet distinct barrier. Both of the
second phrases are also altered slightly from the first: "I" changes to "It" and "I soon
return'd" to "it returned as soon." By using a similar but not identical echoing, Eve's
voice claims an agency that Echo could not. Eve establishes a distinction between her
image and her own body by lengthening the responding phrase, as though accounting for
the nearly instantaneous but still delayed response of a mirrored reflection: by inverting
the word order, and placing "as" between "returned" and "soon," the momentary
disconnect in her experience is reflected rhetorically. She also conflates the visual with
the aural in the phrase "answering looks," once again asserting her agency over the
Narcissus myth by combining the characteristics of both him and Echo.

Although Eve imitates Narcissus, her story concludes differently. Until this
moment, Eve has been focused downward, looking into "the clear / Smooth Lake, that to
me seem'd another Sky" (IV.458-459). Narcissus, too, is faced downward towards his
image, and it is only when he lifts himself upward that he has his moment of self
discovery: “He lifts himself a little, then he cries - / his arms reach toward the trees that
ring that site” (III.95). Because Narcissus is limited by his solitary nature, hyper-focused
on the visual and unaided by an outside voice, his self-recognition leads to self-
destruction. Eve must also be raised from her downward-facing Narcissistic prostration in
order to understand the true nature of her reflection. However, unlike Narcissus, since she
experiences an interruption of sight with sound, her vision is redirected and she is saved
from a narcissistic fate. She explains:

There I had fixt
Mine eyes till now, and pin’d with vain desire,
Had not a voice thus warn’d me, ‘What thou seest,
What there thou seest fair Creature is thyself,
With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
And I will bring thee where no shadow stays
Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, hee
Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy
Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear
Multitudes like thyself, and thence be call’d
Mother of human Race.’ (IV.465-475)

Eve recognizes the potential to become like Narcissus by once again mentioning the
visual. Although Narcissus died by fixing his eyes on his own image and pining with vain
desire, Eve presents that scenario only as a hypothetical conclusion. She, instead, is saved
through sound. In its redirection, the voice uses many reflective statements, combining a
variety of kinds of re-creative forms of reflection. While there appears simple repetition
of “thy coming, and thy soft embraces” and “him thou shalt enjoy / Inseparably thine, to
him shalt bear,” there is also repetition with revision in “What thou seest, / What there
thou seest” as well as explicit recognition of reflective moments: “hee / Whose image
thou art” and “Multitudes like thyself.” It is in this moment that the voice is able to
redirect Eve’s reflection from herself to Adam, successful through the culmination of approaches to rhetorical reflection.

At first, Eve describes her reaction as obedient and without agency: “What could I do, / But follow straight invisibly thus led?” (IV.475-476) This is the moment in her speech in which she expresses no agency or control over her actions. However, while this rhetorically repetitive speech does entice Eve, the voice is ultimately unsuccessful. Once she sees Adam, another version of her reflection, she chooses to turn away:

Till I espi’d thee, fair indeed and tall
Under a Platan, yet methought less fair,
Less winning soft, less amiably mild,
Than that smooth wat’ry image; back I turn’d, (IV.477-480)

By recognizing in Adam both physical similarities and differences, identified both in rhetorical form and in content – “Less fair, / Less winning soft, less amiably mild” – Eve uses her role as second to Adam to compare his body to her own. This recollection provides her with the power to express her moment of greatest agency: “back I turn’d.” Just as she breaks from her repetition of “less” with a recollection of her own image, so too does she actively break away from her prescribed role of reflection in Adam by physically and rhetorically turning away from him.

After Eve’s rejection of her initial redirection, she then recounts Adam’s subsequent attempt at redirection of her gaze back to himself:

‘Return fair Eve,
Whom fli’st thou? Whom thou fli’st, of him thou art,
His flesh, his bone; to give thee being I lent
Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart
Substantial Life, to have thee by my side
Henceforth an individual solace dear;
Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim
My other half.’ (IV.481-88)
Adam’s first word is “Return,” in which he attempts to correct Eve’s “back I turn’d.” Along with recognizing his secondness to Eve’s action, Adam also echoes God’s previous language (or indeed, Eve continues to retell this imitation) with “Whom fli’st thou? Whom thou fli’st,” which is similar in structure to the voice’s first few words, “What thou seest, / what there thou secst.” In this pair of phrases, Adam inverts his word order, symbolic of his sentiment that she and he are two halves of one whole. “His flesh, his bone” is also a simple repetition, specifically recalling the physical reflection of Eve in Adam. Then he finishes: “Part of my soul I seek thee, and thee claim / My other half.” He completes his argument with a combination of two repetitions, first a chiasmus in which “seek” and “claim” are linked, equating the visual with physical ownership, concluding then again an explicit recognition of reflection between them, “my other half.” Here Adam is successful because he adopts each previously established kind of repetition, combining them into one argument. Adam’s speech comes second to that of the voice. In this structural setup, Adam is able to reword components of the first speech in order to make a more convincing argument.

After this second speech concludes, Eve recounts her agreement to unite with Adam: “With that thy gentle hand / Seiz’d mine, I yielded, and from that time see / How beauty is excell’d by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair” (IV.488-491). In this moment, it is not that Eve becomes without agency, but rather the word “yielded” connotes for Eve an active role in which she chooses to partake in Adam’s proposed partnership. This word will recall for readers the narrator’s first description of Eve: “by her yielded, by him best receiv’d, / Yielded with coy submission, modest pride, / And sweet reluctant amorous delay” (IV.309-311). In both instances, her participation in her
interaction with Adam, while submissive, is driven by her active choice to take on a secondary role. Unlike the chance encounters between Echo, Narcissus, and his image, speeches from both the voice and Adam towards Eve are accompanied with active, directed visual focus, aural sound, and movement. These conscious choices provide an opportunity for Eve to avoid the solitary, ignorant demise of Echo and Narcissus.

This series of speeches and actions do not simply recount a successful resolution of Eve’s rebellion from her Godly partner, but reflects more generally the development from her initial reflective interaction. As Eve first comes to her reflection through the sound of murmuring waters, and is followed and completed by her visual experience with her own reflection, the experience is then inverted in her interaction with Adam: she begins with her visual experience of him, causing her to act, to turn away, and it is her aural experience of hearing his words that ultimately unites the pair. This shows maturity in her development from her initial separation of sensual experience. The second pairing of sight with sound provides Eve with a successful conclusion because it is modified by the introduction of Adam’s physical touch: “There is only one event that happened between Eve’s first glance at Adam and her uncertain seeing, and that is her hearing at length Adam’s voice, followed by his touch. Her seeing, her understanding, is in fact what she hears. When her sight betrayed her, the sense of hearing leads her” (Khnov 106). By extending her sensory experience beyond the visual and aural and into the physical, Adam’s touch resolves the disconnect between the reflection she sees in her own image and her physical reflection in Adam. It is Eve’s reconciliation of the senses that Echo and Narcissus experienced separately which causes her not to experience an untimely and lonely death, but rather to participate in a broader community. By accepting
Adam's touch, she sustains a position of power by having made the decision to return to him.

In this scene, however, Adam's words are heard not only within Eve's retelling, but her speech is also preceded by Adam's address to her. As the first words in the poem heard from human's mouth, he begins:

Sole partner and sole part of all these joys,
Dearer thyself than all; needs must the Power
That made us, and for us this ample World
Be infinitely good, and of his good
As liberal and free as infinite, (IV.411-415)

Adam's words too are filled with echoing language. He inverts the style of Echo in his first phrase, "Sole partner and sole part," in which repetition occurs not in the final component but rather includes all but the end of the word. He also highlights the irony of the dual nature of man and woman as both separate beings and two complementary and necessary components of one union by placing the word "sole" next to "partner," yoking the idea of the individual with her required role within a pair. By echoing his first words immediately afterwards, with a revision of "partner" to "part," he brings attention to the complexity of Adam and Eve's relationship, singling out one part of the word itself, meaning, "Senses relating to a division or portion of a whole" (OED la). After positioning Eve in terms of himself and their pairing, his repetitions contain recognition of God's extensive creation: both "the Power / that made us, and for us this ample World" and "Be infinitely good, and of his good / As liberal and free" contain not simply repetition but a developed echoing in which "that made us" changes to "and for us," while "Be infinitely good" change to "and of his good." These alterations highlight God's creative power, but Adam's articulation of the multiple ways in which it is manifest is
possible only through his secondness to God’s creation. Because he can reflect on the things that God has done, his words create a rhetorical echo in which he is able to relay to Eve the extent of God’s impact.

Even these two speeches, though, are framed within a larger context: the entire scene is accessible to the reader through the eyes of Satan, as he looks at Eden for the first time. Like the speeches of Adam and Eve, Satan’s words are ripe with rhetorical echoing, but this echoing is established even before his first speech: the book begins with the narrator’s voice, which rhetorically structures Satan’s role. The presence of reflective language is not simplistic and straightforward but rather corrupted and layered, reflective of his fallen nature. Upon describing Satan, the narrator writes, “from the bottom stir / The Hell within him, for within him Hell / He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell / One step no more than from himself can fly” (IV.19-22). Not only is the word “Hell” repeated thrice but the phrasing is repeated so that “Hell within him” becomes instead “within him Hell.” By moving “Hell” from the beginning of the phrase, where the focus is on the word itself, to after “within him,” it is as though “him” and “Hell” are interchangeable and reversible. With this rhetorical reversal, Satan becomes both surrounded by and the embodiment of Hell. This innovative repetition then continues:

Of what he was, what is, and what must be
Worse; of worse deeds worse sufferings must ensue (IV.25-26) (italics mine).

By placing two phrases on two lines, but splitting them so that each line holds three repeating words, the poet creates a visual mirror between the two, as each repetition of “worse” is aligned just left of each “what.”

2 As well as being connected historically to evil, the left is etymologically linked to weakness in several languages including Dutch, which Milton could speak (Lewalksi).
through echoing in which each questioning “what” is responded by a progressively more hellish and evil “worse.”

Once the reader hears Satan’s voice, his speeches too are ripe with forms of repetition. He asserts: “Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell / And in the lowest deep a lower deep...” (IV.75-76) (italics mine). Like the narrator before him, here Satan adapts the structure of a binary repetition by stacking two repeating words in two sequential lines. In this instance, however, he also slightly modifies the second pairing from “lowest” to “lower.” This modification of repetition is reflective of Satan’s rejection of an established structure, just as he has rejected God’s heavenly hierarchy. This rejection of a simple reflective structure extends throughout the remainder of the speech, most notably at the moment in which he chooses, after thoughts of repentance, to reject God and carry out his plan of Earthly corruption. He says, “So farewell Hope, and with Hope farewell Fear, / Farewell Remorse” (IV.108-109) Here Satan overwhelms the reader with multiple, interwoven repetitions, as the triple repetition of “farewell” in itself contains the repetition of “Hope.” By changing the word order from “farewell Hope” to “Hope farewell,” it is as though the idea of hope is replaced with its rejection, a farewell not only in the associated word, but also in the very space that it used to inhabit. He then continues, “all Good to me is lost; / Evil be thou my Good” (IV.109-110). By repeating “Good” as the second word of the first phrase and then the final word of the second phrase, he bookends his thoughts with a repeated Heavenly word. Within this structure, the sameness of the beginning and end of the phrases creates a structural framework within which the two central words become highlighted: “lost” and “Evil.” Satan here is

This suggests that Milton placed “worse” to the left of “what” to signify the perverted nature of Satan’s choice to rebel.
able to mold his use of repetition to place his evil intentions as the main focal point of his rhetorical structure.

Satan continues his inverted reflective language in his second speech in which he reacts to the happiness of Adam and Eve. He promises to corrupt the happy pair: “and deliver ye to woe, / More woe, the more your taste is now of joy; / Happy, but for so happy ill secur’d” (IV.368-370). He once again combines repetition, as “to woe” changes to “More woe” to “the more.” Like the narrator’s repetition of “worse,” Satan uses an adaptive repetition to increase in intensity his menacing promise with each usage of “more.” As with “Good,” his usage of the positive word “Happy” is immediately followed by “but,” negating its positive characteristics, and the second repetition is even more conversely paired: “Happy ill secur’d” conflates happiness with weakness and potential failure by literally placing the words next to each other.

Then, after Eve finishes speaking to Adam, Satan speaks to himself once more. Repetition is present even from the first line: “Sight hateful, sight tormenting! Thus these two / Imparadis’t in one another’s arms... shall enjoy their fill / Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust” (IV.505-508). By repeating “sight” twice at the beginning of his speech, Satan reorients the reader to the framework of the scene: that amidst Eve’s retelling of her own visual experience to Adam, it is through Satan’s eyes, viewing the entire scene from afar, that the reader is privy to the contained information. After Eve’s visual failure, in which an aural redirection was required, Satan’s solitary, hyper-visual focus on Eden places him in danger of a Narcissistic fall. His overwhelming comparisons between himself and the pair, combined with his extensive use of rhetorical repetition, highlight Satan’s attempt at re-creation, but, like Narcissus and Echo, his experience is a
solitary one. Without a dialogic experience, Satan’s use of echoing is not productive and thus affects no change. It is not until he engages in conversation with Eve, the first dialogic figure, that he is able to create change in Eden.

Given the order of the speeches of Book IV, Eve’s role as interlocutor takes on new meaning. Eve asserts her agency by retelling of her own creation story, a power reinforced by its primary placement within the poem: it comes prior to Adam’s creation story, it is the first words that the reader hears Eve speak, and she speaks not only for herself but also retells the words of Adam and the mysterious voice of God. However, this is not the extent to which her narrative is powerful. Her speech also enables a God-centric speaking symmetry. If Eve is viewed in this instance not only as her own voice, but additionally as a mouthpiece for the voices of those whose stories she retells, the succession of speaking then becomes: Satan > Adam > God > Adam > Satan.

This power that is associated with invisibility is addressed by Christine Froula in “When Eve Reads Milton.” Froula argues that in both Christian doctrine and Paradise Lost, “invisibility is a definitive attribute of authority: the power of the voice and of the
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church fathers, like that of the Wizard of Oz, resides in and depends upon invisibility” (330). She uses the observation of invisibility to assert that the female is archetypally associated with visibility, thus subordinating her to patriarchal, invisible structures. Eve recognizes this hierarchy in her speech in Book IV, which “reproduces the words of the ‘voice’ and of Adam and concludes with an assurance that she has indeed been successfully taught to ‘see’ for herself the superiority of Adam’s virtues to her own” (329). In this God-centric structure, however, Eve completely inverts Froula’s association of female with subordinate visibility. Eve is empowered by the invisible voice that redirects her, and she asserts her dominance over it by recounting its very words to Adam. Without Eve, Adam would not have access to God’s voice in this passage. While considering Eve’s speech as a conduit of the voices of others may seem at first a removal of her agency, it is in fact quite the opposite: Eve is the completing piece of the symmetrical God-reflecting puzzle, without which God would not be central. Prior to this moment, the dialogues in Heaven and Hell are stagnant and without any changing impact; it is only with the appearance of Eve that the ability to convince, influence and change is introduced: “back I turn’d” (IV.480) concludes instead in “With that they gentle hand / Siez’d mine, I yielded” (IV.488-489). Eve asserts her power by relaying this story to Adam; Adam can only hear God’s voice through Eve’s. By retelling to Adam her own experience, unlike Narcissus, who is narrated by a third party, Eve disrupts a traditional reading of woman as inherently second to man, but rather participates actively in a nontraditional dialogic experience, ultimately concluding in a focus on God as central. By choosing to become invisible in this speaking structure, Eve uses the very power of the
invisible structure that Froula argues is under man’s domain in order to grant God a central position through her active yielding to her surrounding male characters.

Milton imbues the speeches of all three characters with modified reflective language, showing through this continually edited revision that Milton has the power to do what Echo cannot: Echo is restricted in her role as second to Narcissus because she is limited by exact rhetorical reflection. By coming after both God and Ovid, Milton is able to overcome the limitations of this secondness by using the interactions between his characters as a space for dialogic experience. Most notably, Eve’s explicitly Narcissus-modeled moment provides a platform for Milton to use her as a vessel of retelling in which she not only experiments with echoed language, but also enables a traditional, hierarchical, male-dominated order through her power as second storyteller. Like Eve, Milton is able to work within a previously established narrative framework by choosing to act invisibly, enacting his reflective revisions through the voices of his characters, thus completing his project of seeing and telling “things invisible to mortal sight” (III.55).

If read through an old-testament lens, this God-centric symmetry is a perfect depiction of man’s relationship to a central God. However, it is also just that: a pre-lapsarian representation of the relationships in Eden. Though the characters engaging in this moment are not yet fallen, Milton nevertheless recognizes that they are not completely perfect and that a dialogic experience between God and man is a necessary one: “While Ovid ironically stressed the role of understanding in regard to individual perception, Milton shows through Satan and Adam as well as Eve that understanding and correction can never come from reliance on individual perception alone but must come from guidance” (Knoespel 80). The role of God as guiding figure is crucial throughout
the poem, and is absent when Satan takes the place of that voice in Book IX, leading Eve to fall. In this moment, Satan recognizes that Eve has abandoned her narcissistic tendencies and instead uses another weakness to tempt her: "As Diana Hume George points out, it is not primarily narcissism to which the beautiful talking serpent tempts Eve but knowledge: to cease respecting the authority fetish of an invisible power and to see the world for herself" (Froula 329). Because Satan tempts Eve with her own knowledge, DuRocher too argues, she must choose to accept her alternative self-reflection or to reject it: "One may well recall that the voice that led Eve away from the pool had promised her everlasting fame and identity as the ‘Mother of human Race’ (IV.475). By placing her worth solely in the eyes of her beholders, Satan would deny Eve the value of her mirrored reflection, and thus rob her of contentment either with herself or her spouse. Satan’s temptation is as destructive of self-love as it is of chastity" (340). While Satan’s reflective rhetoric has no impact on Eden in Book IV, his use of rhetorical echo in Book IX in dialogue with Eve brings about the Fall. In the serpent’s convincing speech, he uses the word “God” or “Gods” nine times: the first three refer to the God she knows, while the final six refer to the hypothetical God-like state she will attain if she eats the fruit. By repeating but changing the sentiment of a word, Satan finally affects change through his use of repetition, which can occur only when he verbally communicates with another living being. He is also successful, ironically, because his extensive usage of the word “God” is not accompanied by God’s voice. Since the good mysterious external voice of Book IV is replaced with an evil one, Eve is not given proper redirection, and the dialogic space which she inhabits leads to the fall of man.
Even though Eve’s yielding to Adam does not persist, and she falls to Satan’s temptation, her role as interlocutor remains a crucial part of her character: “Milton’s Eve is a mediator figure. She mediates Eden to us; mediates between divine and human; past and present; the perfection that is lost and the reconciliation that is to be. Her most perfect parallel in *Paradise Lost* is Christ the mediator himself, whose sacrificial and redemptive language she is attuned to speak” (Davies 6). This fall is a tragic but necessary piece of human’s reconciliation with God: “What she loses for mankind she also redeems for him. She is the source of our exile from Eden; the channel of our return. Only through Eve can we understand the perfect wholeness of unity with the Divine when we were merged effortlessly in the One.” (Davies 5) Though she falls with Satan’s temptation of knowledge, she maintains her self-reflective status as general mother, eventual ancestor to the mother of Christ, whom reunites humans once again with God.

This dual role of Eve as fallen and redemptive is deeply interlinked with the presence of God’s voice. Though her actions in a moment of God’s silence cause man’s separation from God’s accessible voice, Eve also begins the lineage of the man who will once again bring God’s voice to Earth. This *felix culpa* can be understood as God’s implementation of good and evil, as Saint Augustine first asserts, “For he judged it better to bring good out of evil than to preclude evil from existing” (25). By participating in the narcissistic fall in Book IX, Eve acts in a necessary way, playing a role like that of conduit in speaking order in Book IV, bringing about the eventual birth, death, and resurrection of Christ, who is the mouthpiece through which humans are able to once again access the voice of God.
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