

# Humanizing Satan of Milton's *Paradise Lost*

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**Abstract**—Milton wrote an epic in Latin entitled 'In Quintum Novembris.' It is written on the occasion of Guy Fawkes' Day. Fawkes and others had plotted to blow up the Parliament House and were discovered in time. According to Nicolson (1963), this "little epic" in Latin "foreshadows *Paradise Lost*" (p. 77). Probably the man or one of the conspirators of the "little epic" is the Satan of *Paradise Lost* (*PL* from now on). Following the actions taken and adopted by Satan in *PL*, we find that Satan acts like a human being through his deeds and qualities. Anyhow, many critics believe that Milton's Satan is human or humanized at least in some parts in the epic. Not to mention, some critics argue that Satan stands for Milton himself in certain situations. Following his appearance, deeds and qualities, this paper shows how Milton's Satan of *PL* is humanized.

**Index Terms**—*Paradise Lost*, Milton, Satan, Eve, humanized

## I. INTRODUCTION

In *Paradise Lost* (*PL*), Milton seems to humanize Satan either through embodying him as a person or through depicting him with human qualities and attributes. Hence, there is a chance to analyze Satan as "a living person, created by Milton's imagination" (Hamilton, 1944, p. 8). Indeed, Milton realizes what his characters in *PL* are, so he states in this epic, "Thus measuring things in Heav'n by things on Earth" (IV. 893)—all quotations from *PL* are cited by Book and line number from the Lewalski's edition. Lewis (1961) sees in Milton's Satan "a real human being" (p. 94).

Therefore, the degeneration of Satan in the epic depends on two levels: literal and moral. On the literal level, Satan is a person about whom a story is written (Nicolson, 1963, pp. 186-7). On the other hand, she argues that Satan's moral degeneration is suggested by light and darkness (p. 189). He has been an angel in Heaven "Cloth'd with transcendent brightness" (I. 86). Later, he is compared to the sun through mist (I. 594-96) and to the moon with eclipse (I. 596-98). Thus, he gradually loses his angelic light.

In Book V, Raphael, "the sociable Spirit" (V. 221), is sent by God to warn Adam against his enemy; Satan. At Adam's request, Raphael talks about Satan's history. Milton is aware that his characters are purely human, so he states so through Raphael's speech:

What surmounts the reach  
Of human sense, I shall delineate so,  
By likening spiritual to corporal forms  
As may express them best... (V. 571-74)

There is no doubt that these lines are the inevitable evidence that the characters of this epic are humanized in a way or another, particularly Satan. In doing so, Milton wants to be understood, and to express himself in an articulate way.

In *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis (1961) says, "Not as Milton, but as man, [Satan] has trodden the burning marl, pursued vain war with Heaven, and turned aside with leer malign. A fallen man is very like a fallen angel... Milton has put much of himself into Satan. But he has not pleased with that part of himself because he was damned" (p. 101). All those writers and critics who referred to Satan's humanity of Milton's epic did not specify their research and focus on this topic separately. Hence, in this tractate I will track some examples stated and mentioned in this popular epic that will make it clear for the reader that Satan is introduced and presented as if he were a human being we have read about, got familiar with, or seen in our daily lives. Of course, I will quote from the researchers that emphasize the contrast between Satan and mankind.

## II. DISCUSSION

Thir dread commander: he above the rest  
In shape and gesture proudly eminent  
Stood like a Tower; his form had yet not lost  
All her Original brightness, nor appear'd  
Less then Arch Angel ruind, and th' excess  
Of Glory obscur'd: As when the Sun new ris'n  
Looks through the Horizontal misty Air  
Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon  
In dim Eclips disastrous twilight sheds  
On half the Nations, and with fear of change  
Perplexes Monarchs. (I. 589-99)

The story begins in the middle, showing Satan and his followers, the fallen angels, lying on a burning lake after their defeat in the battle of Heaven. Satan emerges from the lake in his large size and moves toward the shore with his shield like the moon through Galileo's telescope (I. 284-291), and his spear like a mast of an admiral ship (I. 292-294). So, "after betraying God, [therebel angels] were demoted to hell and their body shape changed" (Tian-jiao, 2021, p. 731). Werblowsky (1952) argues that "the hell of *Paradise Lost* has nothing to do with the traditional inferno. It reminds us rather of the headquarters of an underground movement, with Satan as the superior, fearless, and Competent general" (p. 70).

Satan seems to be a commander-in-chief who stands like a proud tower, in Milton's epic, then like a sun (I. 591-599). All these similes and metaphors mentioned in the epic and compared Satan with some other entities found in our universe could be used with any creature when we want to make a comparison. The most noticeable quality of Satan is his pride (I. 58) that is emphasized many times and in many ways. Later, he says, "Pride and worse Ambition threw me down" (IV. 40). According to Chapa (1990), "from Satan's point of view, Pride, his pride has acted independently of himself and victimized him" (p. 31). When he appears like a sun, this means that he doesn't lose his brightness and presence completely. At that moment, Satan is still majestic, grand, and proud. As long as he continues his evil, such brightness will be lost gradually. In such a situation, he calls for a meeting; one can think of cabinet or something similar. Bare (2018) writes, "We also note these titles are used ironically to derogate Satan, and similarly call on appellations of male authority (p. 100): His followers "sat as Princes," while he is "the supreme King" (I. 735). To Satan:

A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.  
The mind is its own place, and in it self  
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. (I. 253-55)

As a chairman, Satan opens the meeting of debates. He addresses his followers with their former titles, "Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heav'n" (II. 11). According to Nichols (2017), "Milton's Satan is similar to the heroes written about by authors of the ancient world" (p. 2). Lamb (2021) emphasizes the idea of "allusions to Greek and Roman epics emphasize the contrast between Satan and mankind" (p. 25), and Calloway (2005) does the same. Chapa (1990), on the other hand, argues that "Milton's Satan has all of the polish and twisted rhetoric of corrupt politicians so detested by Milton's seventeenth century reader" (p. 41).

As a commander-in-chief, he is to lead and encourage his army (Nicolson, 1963, p. 204), and to remind them that there is a chance to win and they haven't lost completely, i.e. war has its ups and down. This is the way any human being- as a leader- will do. This situation reflects Milton's experience of war-time according to Nicolson, 1963, p. 204. In this sense, Milton applies his personal experience to the creation of his imagination and depicts no more than a human commander-in-chief. By doing so, he manages to write about the creation of mankind, and makes it easy for his readers understand the story; in this way he addresses them according to their mental ability and understanding.

For Asiatidou (2021), "Satan and his fallen angels become the mirror Milton places in front of himself and his readers" (p. 498). In this context, "the Satan of *Paradise Lost* is representative of the human condition as he embodies the same weaknesses and desires of the reader" (Cammarrer, 2011, p. 13).

At the end of the war-like meeting, Beelzebub, as a spokesman of Satan's cabinet, sums up the debates, addresses the army generals by their former titles, presents the situation, and concludes that they are to take revenge through the newly born world (Nicolson, 1963, p. 210). Thus, this revenge does need some kind of adventure. The one who takes over this responsibility is Satan himself. When he declares his acceptance, the meeting ends. The leader has to encourage his followers at least through his deeds. Thus, he is ready to set on his voyage to that world. It seems as if he were an earthly leader who prefers being killed rather than arrested. He has to encounter Chaos, Hell and the unknown; chaos and the unknown we talk about in our daily lives and are familiar with, but Hell--with capital H-- is added because of the creation context. Yet, Milton invokes the notion of being a criminal in Satan's character by describing Hell where his Satan dwells as the "Prison ordain'd / In utter darkness" (I. 71-72).

At the entrance to Hell, there are Sin and Death, whom Satan doesn't recognize for Sin has changed and now "seem'd Woman to the waste, and fair. . ." (II. 650-59), and he doesn't see Death before. She is getting old, yet she is living at ease. Herein, Milton confers human characteristics on all his characters. At Satan's arrival, Death meets him, and they stand against each other until Sin interferes. In this connection, Satan is the figure who "alone faces Death, Chaos, and the unknown" (Kastor, 1974, p. 59). In this sense, Satan's journey requires some strength and courage. To our standing, these qualities are supposed to be found in any army-leader. And Milton confers human traits on Satan who should overcome any difficulty to prove like human beings his right to the rank of commander. More than this, like human beings Satan puts his trust in arms:

Perhaps more valid Armes,  
Weapons more violent, when next we meet,  
May serve to better us, and worse our foes,  
Or equal what between us made the odds,  
In Nature none. (VI. 438-42)

Like a tourist, visiting the Sun (III. 572-622), Satan's sight, thence, "is sharpened because no shadows fall anywhere" (Hughes, 1957, p. 273). So, the Sun "sharp'n'd his visual ray / To objects distant far" (III. 620-21). Therefore, he

recognizes Uriel, who stands in the sun. Uriel doesn't recognize Satan who transforms himself into a "stripling Cherube" (III. 636-44). This leads to one of Satan's semi-human quality, i.e. hypocrisy: "Hypocrisie, the onely evil that walks / Invisible, except to God alone" (III. 683-84) (Nicolson, 1963, p. 235). Indeed, Satan in his powerful and majestic position doesn't need this quality; to become a hypocrite is a human attribute.

At the beginning of Book IV, there is a major soliloquy given by Satan, who talks about himself frankly. Nicolson (1963) states, "Inflamed with rage as true angels never are, he boils with passion" (p. 236). Milton here is depicting Satan as if he were his friend or someone he knows. In this soliloquy, Satan is not certain of the future:

Now rowling, boiles in his tumultuous brest,  
And like a devillish Engine back recoiles  
Upon himself; horror and doubt distract  
His troubl'd thoughts, and from the bottom stirr  
The Hell within him, for within him Hell  
He brings, and round about him. (IV. 16-21)

He is pessimistic about what is going to happen. It seems as if he were a man on a quest seeking his own survival. But he states, "Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell" (IV. 75). He is like any person who doesn't know his fate, but he keeps on struggling; he is determined. To Satan, "Hell is a state of mind" (Nicolson, 1963, p. 236). It is an internal conflict which Satan lives; one imagines him as a hero of a novel or a play of our times. In his soliloquy, Satan acknowledges that it is his fault to be in such a case. Nicolson (1963) clarifies that Satan "knows that repentance is still possible, but it would involve submission" (p. 236). Satan makes it clear in *PL*, "and that word / Disdain forbids me and my dread of shame" (IV. 81-82). He is like a daredevil person. It is pride and arrogance that prevent him from repentance. Indeed, these attributes are what may lead human beings to wage wars. If God's purpose is to bring forth good out evil, Satan will continue "Evil be thou my Good" (IV. 110).

Further changes in his appearance suggest the moral descent: "Thrice chang'd with pale, ire, envie and despair, / Which marrd his borrow'd visage" (IV. 115-16). In our daily life, appearance may signalize defeat. In this sense, "Milton uses Satan as a mirror for the reader to view his own faults and passions, and by doing so places the reader on the same platform as his character" (Cammarelli, 2011, p. 5).

Regarding his behavior, Leaping over the wall like a thief, Satan enters the Garden of Eden where he sees Adam and Eve, who go to eat and then rest by the side of a stream. The animals of Eden play around them. Satan's pity for Adam and Eve "To you whom I could pittie thus forlorne / Though I unpittied" (IV. 374-75) is eventually only an elaborate form of self-pity" (Rajan, 1967, p. 99). "Self-pity" is a human attribute; it is not an attribute of a majestic and powerful angel. He bursts out in envy of Adam and Eve and insists on continuing his evil. Becoming envious indicates another human attribute.

So, Satan decides to attack Adam and Eve from their weakest point- the prohibition imposed on them; i.e. not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Yet he needs more information, so he keeps walking around and following them to know about them what he needs to wage his war. These are tactics we know as humans. More than this, he has human inclinations "because Eve's beauty astounds him" (Flaspohler, 2011, p. 4). More than this, driven by a sexual desire, Evans (1968) argues that Satan "saw them [Eve and Adam] engage in their natural functions" so "he [the serpent] conceived a passion for her [Eve]" (p. 46);

What pleasing seemd, for her now pleases more,  
She most, and in her look summs all Delight.  
Such Pleasure took the Serpent to behold. (IX. 453-55)

At the gate of Paradise, there are Gabriel, "Chief of th' Angelic Guards" (IV. 550) with other guards. Uriel, "Th' Arch-Angel" (III. 648) joins them later to warn Adam and Eve against the evil spirit he has seen, "A Spirit, zealous, as he seem'd" (IV. 565). "Zealous" and "seem'd" suggest that he is not sure of that spirit. In addition, the quality "zealous" is a very human characteristic. Then, Uriel returns to the sphere of the sun. Satan has visited the sun. Here Uriel is reporting about a convict. Even the loyal angels, eating like guards, are humanized in this epic. As a result, Gabriel orders angelic patrols—probably Milton has in mind some city's patrols—to keep watch and search the garden. Disguising the self, they find Satan at Eve's ear "Squat like a Toad" (IV. 800). He is trying to poison her dreams. Then there is a discussion which results from Satan's confession of his spying out the new world. Gabriel rebukes Satan's dishonesty, disloyalty, hypocrisy and warns him against his return (IV. 945-967). All these attributes and characteristics are human. "Pretending first" (IV. 947), "faithfulness profan'd" (IV. 951), "sly hypocrite" (IV. 957), "Back to th' infernal pit" (IV. 965), with these phrases Gabriel rebukes Satan. Here Milton describes a situation that we can imagine and may experience in our daily life. Gabriel and Satan are to fight but the divine scales stop them.

Although the scales are a sign of justice, yet Satan knows what they suggest. Satan is a thief and has been caught red-handed. This reminds the reader of Fawkes' escape to Italy- the hero of Milton's "little epic" in Latin referred to at the beginning of this article that foreshadows *Paradise Lost*. Surprisingly, it is Satan, the Adversary [of God and Man], who flees "murmuring" (IV. 1015). Anyhow, Satan here is acting humanly.

In Book IV, Satan does "sat like a cormorant" (IV. 196), later is like "a proud Steed reind" (IV. 858). While tempting Eve, he is "squat like a Toad" (IV. 800). These similes are for expressing the attitude he has at each time. Milton here

uses these imageries to describe the behavior and action Satan follows at each time. Analogies might be used in our daily speech to refer to a person's behavior.

In the same book and at Adam's request, Raphael relates Satan's history. Before the apostasy, Satan stands "in Heav'n upright and pure" (IV. 837), "glorious once / And perfect" (V. 567-8). Raphael continues that once God calls all the angels and declares his only Son the head of the heavenly hosts. Here even God is humanized; God doesn't need to call anyone, He orders. At God's announcement, Satan "could not beare / Through pride that sight, & thought himself impair'd" (V. 664-5) despite that he is called, not ordered. Late at night, Satan summons his followers to a meeting where he claims independence and equality "by proof to try / Who is our equal" (VI. 865-66). Here "Satan is driven to deny that God created him" (Hamilton, 1944, p. 22). Furthermore, Satan argues, "Know none before us, self-begot, self-rai's'd / By our own quick'ning power ..." (V. 860-61). Apostasy, awakening at night, calling for a meeting and having a debate are human qualities, not actions of an adversary to God. Here it is clear how Milton tries to make his work at the scope of any human being's experience and understanding.

What is presented and described at the battle field indicates something human. At the field, Abdiel, "the Seraphim" (V. 804), first strikes Satan. Then, Michael, "Celestial Armies Prince" (VI. 44), rebukes Satan as the Author of evil, and fights Satan, cuts him into half with his great sword which later enters Satan's right side. And "Satan first knew pain ... with discontinuous wound" (VI. 327-29). Hence, his "frailty marks his material debasement, and his capacity for being wounded—a departure from his angelic counterpart" (Jenkins, 2021, p. 11). Before this in Book I, throughout his speech Satan has been speaking "in pain, / Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despare" (I. 125-26) "which shows again Satan's transformation into a different being" (Gilbert, 1923, p. 177). After being wounded, he is carried away and rescued by his followers and quickly recovers. The day ends with the rebels' disorder. Fighting in such a way, feeling and knowing pain, and recovering are human traits. By the way, 'pain' has been mentioned many times in the epic. After three days, the Son derives the rebels, led by Satan, out of Heaven. For nine days they fall until Hell receives them. Here Milton appears as if he were talking about a war and enemies known to the reader except the fall of the nine days; that will be far away from our imagination.

Returning to the earth, Satan comes to Eden in order to tempt Eve in the form of a serpent creeping "in every Bush and Brake" (IX. 160). Kastor (1974) argues, "The use of disguise is of course one of the principal characteristics of the tempter generally" (p. 25). Disguise is a practice a human being may rely on at certain moments in order to hide the self.

Anyway, Satan as a tempter, although motivated by revenge, is marked by his envy of Adam and Eve; "his jealousy makes him ugly in a very human way... his very human jealousy, envy, and desire demonstrate that the tempter, despite his animal disguises and actions, has very human failings. Douglas Bush is not alone in describing the Satanic figure in Books IV and IX as 'a very human villain'" (Kastor, 1974, p. 68). Anyhow, experiencing emotions represents "something other than a heavenly being" (Hardin, 2021, p.44). Indeed, in all scenes and actions he takes, he acts as a human being motivated by qualities of human nature. All the night, Satan waits in ambush for Adam and Eve. This being is not the majestic, powerful creature Milton tries to introduce in Book III of *PL*.

The next morning, Adam and Eve separate at her request. Satan exploits the situation and goes to Eve. As mentioned earlier, he knows she is easily deceived by appearance, and inferior to Adam- she is to God through him-, and probably Satan sees, while spying, that her effect on Adam is apparent. On the other hand, it might be he lusts for women, for Eve may remind him of his former mistress Sin; an act that is not angelic anyhow. His lust for women makes him human. Accordingly, "Satan's tempting of Eve will "dishonor" (IX. 297) her" (Flaspohler, 2011, p. 32). In addition, he flatters her, calling her "Queen of this Universe" (IX. 684); while reading this phrase, one may divert his attention to a Hollywood actress.

In his attempt, Satan uses a very human investigating way to persuade Eve. First, he flatters her; calls her by titles, such as "sovrän Mistress" (IX. 532). Secondly, the Tempter expresses his concern, "but with shew of Zeale and Love / To man" (IX. 665-66). Thirdly, he argues, referring to the benefits of the Tree, "Ye shall not die: / How should ye? by the Fruit? it gives you life / To knowledge" (IX. 685-87). Gradually she is convinced. Finally, he uses logic; when she is surprised to hear the serpent speak, he explains that he has eaten the fruit of a wonderful tree and gained reason and knowledge. He clarifies, "God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just... Why but to awe, / why but to keep ye low and ignorant... That ye should be as Gods, since I as man, / Internal Man" (IX. 700-711). The phrase, "since I as man" suggests that Satan admits that he could have the qualities of human beings in *PL*; speaking, behaving, and acting. Being convinced, Eve eats at the end.

Worth mentioning what Kastor (1974) says about the tempter, "Not only is the tempter man-sized, but like man he is a spirit "incarnate," conjured of spirit and animal matter" (p. 68):

Into a Beast, and mixt with bestial slime,  
This essence to incarnate and imbrute. (IX. 165-66)

More than anything else, the Tempter's soliloquies contain "a wide range of human feelings: grief, pity, self-aborrence, disgust, hate, revenge, lust, envy, jealousy, pride, ambition and more" (Kastor, 1974, p. 68). These qualities indicate that Milton has depicted a man more than any other creature.

In Book X, the Prince of Hell appears victorious and returns to "high throne" (X. 445). Hamilton (1944) comments on his return saying, "The most dramatic example is when Satan, returning from Earth as a conqueror invites his angels 'Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers' to enter into 'full bliss', and the applause for which he waits

turns to hissing of serpents” (p. 16). Anyhow, this is a way of showing gratitude to this creature. Like humans, particularly rebels, Satan prefers independence and authority; he addresses his fellows:

Here we may reign secure, and in my choise  
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:  
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n. (l. 261-63)

Many actions of human nature overshadow the last scene: invitation, meeting, showing bliss, and expressing gratitude. In addition, Waldock (1966) argues, “Milton expresses in Satan much more of himself . . . and such a picture of the Satan of the first two books is surely a very partial portrait” (pp. 76-77). Hence, Milton puts in this character a lot of human traits. As a matter of fact, Milton “Milton relies heavily on Satan’s humanism . . . the character of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is not devoid of accountability and compassion – emotions mankind is founded upon” (Cammareri, 2011, p. 12). Probably Milton depicts human experiences he has lived or at least witnessed in his life and time.

### III. CONCLUSION

Satan in *Paradise Lost* is humanized either through his character as a person or through many traits and actions that are human: the way he deals with events, the qualities he has, and the actions he takes in the epic; most if not all of them refer to a human being. In addition, in some cases Milton tends to degrade Satan more than introducing him in a humanized way; he is compared to animals or birds. In those cases, we know how some human attitudes are compared with those of animals because some animals and birds are known for specific behavior that might be adopted by some people. Hence, Milton tends to compare Satan with some animals and birds. Also it is intended to simplify the idea for readers to comprehend the story of creation.

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