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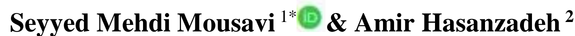
The Image of *Āz* in Persian Manichean Literature and Milton's *Paradise Lost*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Abstract: One branch of comparative literature is to study similar themes and images across world literature. While previous studies have mentioned the influence of Persian Manichean literature on John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), little has been done on the image of Manichean demon *Āz* in comparison to Milton's representation of Satan. This is especially significant because Manichean dualism undermines the assumed monism of Milton's epic. Accordingly, this essay shows traces of Manichean dualism in the epic by discussing Satan's language and fractured passions. In the second part of the essay, we focus on the sympathetic representation of Satan as to bring to the fore the emotional readerly engagement of the book. The affective narrative moves of Milton seem to contradict the more explicit theological authorial intentions, i.e. the just logic of the world. Thus, the dualistic passions of a Manichean demon, while meant to alienate us from the text, seem to merge with an affective intensity in the depiction of Satan's character, so much so that he becomes less a demon than a human, and gains a contradictory and hybrid nature. Ultimately, the objective of this comparative reading of *Paradise Lost* is to explain the incongruity between the author's (Milton) intentions and the narrative effects.
Keywords: John Milton; Manichaeism; *Paradise Lost*; passion; sympathy.

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1. Introduction

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) is built upon a set of dualities. Both in form and content, the epic depicts a contrary state of human experience of which the conflict between good and evil is central. While Milton (2007, 1.26) takes upon himself the grand task of justifying "the ways of God to men", it is arguable that the book leads to serious theological doubts than confirm orthodox beliefs. On the surface, the hero of *Paradise Lost* is Adam, who is ultimately saved by the grace of God's Son. However, some assume that the character of Satan is the most prominent presence in the narrative, especially because the first two books have Satan as their protagonist. There is also the view that neither Adam nor Satan are the heroes; rather it is in fact Milton the poet who places himself on a similar par with previous epic poets and thus becomes the narrator-hero of the book.

The dualities between good and evil, creation and fall, are also mirrored in the poem's structural tension: a struggle between unity and disruptive forces. While it is important to acknowledge the book's strong inclination towards unity and organic wholeness, it is equally crucial to recognize that this drive is counterbalanced by a significant opposing force. This counterforce works against the unity, leading to unresolved decisions and paradoxes, both metaphorically and literally (Herman, 2008). The dynamic interplay highlights the complexity of Milton's work and the persistent conflict between harmony and discord.

It is difficult to decide once and for all what Milton's stance toward the problem of evil is. Peter F. Fisher notes that in theory Milton was "always unequivocally at one with himself and unequivocally a monist," while in practice, that is, "in his ethical experience, he was always in conflict – a conflict born of the struggle between a moral dualism which he experienced and a metaphysical monism which he believed (1956, p. 28). In a sense, Christ in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* represents Milton's metaphysical beliefs, while Satan stands for the ethical conflicts. Put differently, the conflict is between Christ's monism and Satan's dualism. Harold Bloom (2009, p. 98) writes that "the great dualist in *Paradise Lost* is Satan, who remains the marvelous scandal of the poem". How can we explain that "marvelous scandal"? A clue here

is Satan's division of spirit and matter, which is reflected in the kind of language he uses.

A theological solution to Satan's dualism (spirit vs. matter) is to note that Milton shows Satan's dualism only to prove him wrong. That is, through authorial negation, monism ultimately defeats dualism. Yet, this does not explain Satan's eloquent language and pathos. In his *Satanic Epic* (2002), the astute Milton scholar Neil Forsyth traces the origins of Satan as he is imagined in world culture and writes that in the early church Satan was indeed seen as the source of heresies, challenging orthodoxy. Leaders like Irenaeus and Augustine linked these heresies to the original rebellion in heaven, and Heretics were viewed as followers of the Devil. This constructed narrative portrayed heresies as deviations from original truth, countering Gnostic beliefs that evil originated with creation.

Such heretical influence aligns Milton with Gnostic thought, particularly in *Paradise Lost*'s portrayal of forbidden knowledge. Gnosticism esteems hidden or forbidden knowledge as a path to enlightenment, and Milton's sympathetic portrayal of figures seeking knowledge (such as Satan and Eve) resonates with this tradition (Nuttall, 1998). Galileo, a figure Milton admired, challenged cosmological orthodoxy with his discoveries, which incited conflict with the Church. By invoking Galileo's observations in *Paradise Lost* (2007, 1.286-91) as Satan contemplates the cosmos, Milton emphasizes the perilous yet noble pursuit of knowledge.

Milton's Satan further embodies traits of the Gnostic figure Allogenes (or "other-born"), a seeker of truths beyond the established order (Nuttall, 1998). Allogenes symbolizes the outsider who disrupts accepted norms, which parallels Satan's challenge to divine authority. Through this lens, Milton's characterization of Satan reveals a fascination with Gnostic themes, as the quest for knowledge drives figures who question or even defy divine authority.

Milton's exploration of dualism may be taken to align intriguingly with Gnostic ideas, especially in depicting the struggle between opposing forces. This connection enriches the analysis of good and evil in *Paradise Lost*, and suggests that his engagement with Gnostic thought adds a philosophical layer to his portrayal of moral conflict. Far from aligning fully with Gnostic beliefs, his

approach reflects a complex negotiation with these ideas, and reveals a theological depth that resonates with both orthodox and heretical traditions.

2. Milton and Mani

Forsyth's close reading of *Paradise Lost* indicates that Satan is a medium through which Milton levels a critique against mainstream Christianity. The first two books parody divine creation, and hence relate Satan to the Gnostic Demiurge. In the same vein, Manichean heresies recur in the narrative. According to Burkitt, "the Manicheans began by teaching about the two principles, or roots, and the three moments, that is to say, the past, the present, and the future" (1922, p. 269). Mani's two principles consist of Light, characterized by its intrinsic goodness, rationality, and orderliness; and Darkness, which embodies evil, chaos, and unrestrained passion. This conceptual framework, with its distinct separation of Light and Dark, ultimately gave rise to a dualistic system of beliefs that profoundly influenced various philosophical and religious traditions.

Several elements of Iranian culture began to influence the Western world as it was becoming Christianized. From the third century onwards, Manichaeism's success posed a challenge to the church's foundations, and its dualistic influence continued through the Middle Ages. Additionally, various Iranian religious ideas including the motifs of the Nativity, angelology, the theme of the magus, theology of light, and the elements of Gnostic mythology were absorbed by Christianity and Islam. Their influence can still be seen from the High Middle Ages through to the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment (Torabi, 2011). Manichaeism emerged as one of the last and largest groups to bring Zoroastrian concepts from the ancient Near East into the Western World. Zoroastrianism, which was the main religion of the Persian Empire until the 10th century AD, significantly shaped Western thought as it spread through Greece, Rome, and Europe, affecting ideological systems during the classical, Hellenistic, and early Roman periods.

Mani's theology integrates elements from various traditions, including Zoroastrian cosmology, where the gods of light and darkness are locked in an eternal struggle. In Zoroastrian cosmology, the god of light, Ahura Mazda, and the god of darkness, Ahriman, engage in combat until the final Renovation at the end of

time (Torabi, 2011). This integration reflects a broader synthesis of religious ideas that shaped Mani's dualistic worldview. The dualistic themes central to Manichaeism, originating from Zoroastrianism, and their permeation into Christian and Islamic thought, underscore the persistent influence of these ancient traditions. This cultural and religious synthesis enriches the understanding of the intricate interplay between good and evil as explored in both theological and literary contexts.

No doubt, Milton was familiar with the teachings of Mani, the Apostle of Light. While Fisher (1956, p. 43) points out that "Manichaeism was an essentially ascetic creed and could not have appealed to Milton as a religious system", he acknowledges that Milton's efforts to distance himself from this heresy were "sometimes not very successful" (1956, p. 30). A concern shared by Mani and Milton is the foundation of things, i.e. how things came into existence in the first place. The origin of evil has indeed been the thorn in the flesh of many theologians and philosophers. Milton's narrative does not offer a straightforward theodicy, though in *Paradise Lost* and more explicitly in *De Doctrina Christiana* the problem is addressed. Line 28 of Book I "say first what cause", addressed to the Muse, brings to the mind the epic beginnings of Homer, Hesiod, and Virgil, and reflects the theme of origins. No wonder "first" is one of the recurring words in the epic.

Milton's parody of divine creation is accentuated not only by filtering the first two books through Satan's eyes, but also by means of giving Satan such characteristics as courage, determination, and fortitude, howsoever they might be in the service of evil. In Fisher’s view, "Satan, although used to symbolize the evil will, does not therefore provide a solution for the problem of evil as far as Milton is concerned nor does his existence prove a satisfactory answer to the difficult question of its origin, but he is used rather to explore its many ramifications" (1956, p. 30). If not the *de facto* originator of evil (or error), Satan is certainly a manifestation its potential.

It has been mentioned that the two principles of Manichaeism are Light and Darkness, more specifically:

Darkness had risen against itself, as the tree of evil opposed its own fruits, and the fruits rebelled against the tree, for inherent discord and enmity were the essence of darkness and its components. They knew no tranquility, and it was this very

rebellion, tumult, and movement that ultimately elevated them towards the threshold of the luminous world. They favored the splendid and majestic beauty, and the desire to attain it blossomed within their hearts. Therefore, all the material elements of malevolence gathered together and deliberated to find a way to unite with the light (Bahar, 2015, p. 171).

The above account points to the disorderly and inherently repulsive yet intriguingly passionate essence of Darkness as an aspect of our material bodies' primal nature. According to Burkitt, "the Dark and the Light were separate, but the Dark somehow conceived a passion for the Light" (1922, p. 269). The key here is "passion". In Manichaeism, while there is a repressed desire for reaching out for Light in all matter, desire in itself is associated with *Āz*, which roughly translates to "avarice/wish/ambition". In such a view, "human beings, male and female, who are born in the whole world, are all a construction of Āz" (Mirecki & BeDuhn, 2001, p. 5). More specifically, "Amongst all the figures of counter-creator agents in Persian mythology and epics, *Āz* (lit. avarice) and *Niyaz* (lit. want), as described in the young Avestan, Middle Persian and Manichaean texts, and in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh,* are the most powerful and destructive demons. The names of these demons are mentioned in the Zoroastrian, Zurvanite and Manichaean sources and in most cases have been indicated as a pair of supernatural beings that are closely connected to each other" (Doostkhah, 1998, p. 67).

In Manichaeism, the fundamental distinction lies not between matter and spirit, but between Light and Darkness, which represent good and evil. Accordingly, everything, including God, is viewed as substance. Manichaeism shares notable similarities with Stoicism and Stoic-influenced Middle Platonism (Mirecki & BeDuhn, 2001). Mani drew on Stoic and Platonic ideas, using familiar terms and imagery not as the core of his teachings, but as tools to express his message. It is clear, then, that Mani frequently redefined and reinterpreted the intellectual ideas of his time, employing them in new ways to serve his beliefs (Mirecki & BeDuhn, 2001).

In *Paradise Lost*, elements reminiscent of Manichaeism emerge, not explicitly as a philosophical endorsement, but rather as a poetic dramatization of dualistic tension inherent within Christian cosmology. Though Milton himself was not a Manichaean (he

identified as a Christian, specifically Protestant), certain Manichaean motifs, such as cosmic dualism, a struggle between good and evil, and spiritual warfare, inform significant aspects of the epic. The key here is what he has said in *De Doctrina Christiana*: "Inasmuch then as the whole man is uniformly said to consist of body, spirit, and soul (whatever may be the distinct provinces severally assigned to these divisions), I shall first show that the whole man dies" (Milton, 1985, p. 390). To consist uniformly of body, spirit, and soul is to say that Milton is a monist, for whom a distinct division between matter and spirit is hard to uphold. Everything is substance. Accordingly, we first mention examples of dualism in the epic before turning to the problematic representation of Satan in order to throw into relief the gap between the dualistic content of the poem and the possible identification with Satan as a hybrid figure.

3. "O sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams"

In *Paradise Lost*, the origin of evil is directly connected to the exaltation scene in Book V and the complex relationship between the Son and Satan. Satan's envy and pride emerge sharply at the Son's begetting, a moment that parallels Mani's vision of the birth of evil. To understand Satan's reaction, Revard (1973) suggests we examine what in the Son elicits both hatred and envy within Satan. This dual response, in essence, can reflect Manichaeism's cosmic struggle and reveal allegorical and philosophical similarities that deepen the portrayal of evil's origins.

Milton's agonism in *Paradise Lost* reveals Satan's *Āz* for the Son's divine qualities. According to Revard, "Satan does not see the Son's radiance as love, but as a splendid and enviable quality; he does not connect the radiance, moreover, with his person, but with his office" (1973, p. 195). In other words, Satan wishes he were the Son, and in this sense, his intentions are "virtuous", though his means be evil. That "enviable quality", however, is undermined by Milton's representation of the exaltation scene where the Son is elected. Read closely, God seems an autocrat (Forsyth, 2002, p. 54):

Hear all ye Angels, Progenie of Light,
Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Vertues, Powers,
Hear my Decree, which unrevok't shall stand.
This day I have begot whom I declare
My onely Son, and on this holy Hill
Him have anointed, whom ye now behold

At my right hand; your Head I him appoint;
And by my Self have sworn to him shall bow
All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess him Lord:
Under his great Vice-gerent Reign abide
United as one individual Soule
For ever happie: him who disobeyes
Mee disobeyes, breaks union, and that day
Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
Into utter darkness, deep ingulft, his place
Ordaind without redemption, without end (2007, 5.600-15).

Paradoxically, God's command, which was meant to promote unity, leads to division (and the emergence of evil). This raises a serious question about the nature and consequence of authority. Satan feels that his merit is injured as Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello* feels that he has been unjustly ignored. Satan's reaction to the divine decree is captured when he "thought himself impaired" (2007, 5.665). Impaired means "made worse" and plays on the word "pair", implying that Satan felt himself no longer equal to the Son, and perhaps once considered himself to be of equal stature. Thus, similar to historical pairs like Cain and Abel, Satan and the Son are framed as rivals or adversaries (Forsyth, 2002). At this critical moment, Āz, Satan's internal passion or desire, which draws him toward the Son, becomes the driving force behind his disobedience. Milton links Satan's resentment directly to his ambition for occupying the Son's position.

Many critics uncover the worldview and hidden ideology of a text by identifying the oppositions within it and addressing the question of how the author or poet has established a relationship between the opposing sides of these contrasts. The key point is that the nature of these oppositions and the relationship between them in literary and artistic texts are shaped through artistic techniques and literary devices (Hayati & Jabbari, 2023). Ultimately, it is the author's mode of expression that makes these binaries and their relationships acceptable to the readers. It is by means of identifying these binary oppositions in any text that the implied worldview is revealed. Milton was greatly interested in philology and aural associations. Puns and wordplays are frequent in *Paradise Lost*. Bernhard claims that, "puns and layering of meaning represent the consequences of the fall" (2006, p. 7). In the following scene, while his look is fixed sometimes on heaven and sometimes on the shining

sun, Satan is doubtful as to what his real desires are. His soliloquy, where he addresses the sun, is more than ambiguous:

O thou that with surpassing Glory crownd,
Look'st from thy sole Dominion like the God
Of this new World; at whose sight all the Starrs
Hide thir diminisht heads; to thee I call,
But with no friendly voice, and add thy name
O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, … (2007, 4.32-39).

Considering the context of Satan’s fall (or rather exile), Milton's pun on "sun" and "son" is quite intelligent. We are reminded of Hamlet when he addresses King Claudius: "I am too much in the sun" (1.2.67). Indeed "in Satan's hatred, we can read the plot of the poem—Satan's desire to replace the sun as the god of this new world—and so, too, as the Son" (Forsyth, 2002, pp. 341-42). Needless to say, a pun is essentially a dualistic figure of speech.

Another aspect of linguistic dualism in the poem is the use of "Or". Or brings to focus the dilemma of choice. Theologically, Or shows a postlapsarian state of cognition where the mind is rift between good and evil, and more broadly speaking, between fundamentally opposite values. Take this epic simile in Book IV:

As when a prowling Wolfe,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching where Shepherds pen thir Flocks at eeve
In hurdl'd Cotes amid the field secure, pens of woven reeds
Leaps o're the fence with ease into the Fould:
Or as a Thief bent to unhoord the cash
Of some rich Burgher, whose substantial dores, town-dweller
Cross-barrd and bolted fast, fear no assault,
In at the window climbs, … (2007, 4.183-93).

In the depiction of Satan's leap over Eden's wall, a hungry wolf is juxtaposed to a thieving burglar. The wolf, driven by natural impulse and hunger, contrasts sharply with the thief, who is motivated by greed and possibly class envy. Despite their differing motivations, both figures symbolize aspects of Satan, yet they are not coterminous. Milton highlights this distinction by linking the thief to "Church lewd Hirelings", which implies a connection to corrupt church officials or hypocrites, who, like the thief, are driven by greed and deceit. In contrast, the wolf represents more primal, instinctual drives, such as hunger and predation. Together, these

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figures reveal different aspects of Satan’s character, one marked by cunning and hypocrisy, the other by natural, unrestrained desire. Herman is most subtle to note that "both thief and Hireling 'climbe'; the wolf, on the other hand, leaps, and Milton puts the wolf first" (2008, p. 47).

The wolf, in its insatiable hunger, is comparable to *Āz* in Manicheism. As figures of evil, both show unrestrained desire. In Mani's phantasmagoria, the demon *Āz* is "thievish, monstrous, greedy, and lustful" (Mirecki & BeDuhn, 2001, pp. 12-13). However, wolfishness aside, Satan, who used to be called Lucifer (morning star), evokes a feeling of illumination as when we read "like a Comet burn'd, / That fires the length of Ophiucus huge / In th' Artick Sky" (2007, 2.706-10). We know that fire is a pivotal symbol in Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. Aesthetically, the image of a burning comet—blazing uncontrollably through the sky—captures Satan's rebellious energy and defiance of divine order. Elsewhere, we read that Satan "Springs upward like a Pyramid of fire / Into the wilde expanse" (2007, 2.1013-14). Is "pyramid of fire" suggestive of evil or power?

We must ask what is it that Satan actually desires? As noted before, that the epic begins with Satan's perspective makes everything which comes later a parody of the Satanic situation. Put bluntly, what Adam desires may be interpreted as a parallel to what Satan desires. In a dialogue between Raphael and Adam, the desire to "know" has indeed gnostic overtones. Raphael thwarts any further questioning rather awkwardly:

Let it suffice thee that thou know'st
Us happy, and without love no happiness.
Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
(And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
In eminence, and obstacle find none
Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars;
Easier than air with air, if spirits embrace,
Total they mix, union of pure with pure
Desiring; nor restrained conveyance need
As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul (2007, 8.620-29).

This has to do with the central dilemma of the book: are angels made of the same substance that humans are? If yes, Milton is a monist. The key is "total they mix", but also more poignantly "desiring". Corns (2014) argues that the angels' union is not for the

purpose of procreation but rather for expressing their love for one another. Readers cannot avoid seeing in this a parallel of the Adam-Eve relationship. Formerly one of the angels, the fallen Satan, observing voyeuristically the embrace of Adam and Eve, is now quite sincere in lamenting "I to hell am thrust, / Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire / . . . with pain of longing pines" (2007, 4.508-11). How could an angel be jealous, even though fallen? We suggest that Satan be taken as the Manichean demon Āz, given independent power and desirous at the same time.

4. Fierce Passions

In a word, the interest of the poem [*Paradise Lost*] arises from the daring ambition and fierce passions of Satan. (Hazlitt, 1960, p. 65)

There is in the character of Milton's Satan some sense of mysterious inwardness with which we identify. His jealousy of Adam and Eve in Book IV is most memorable, where we read:

Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two
Imparadis't in one anothers arms
The happier *Eden*, shall enjoy thir fill
Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust,
Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
Among our other torments not the least,
Still unfulfill'd with pain of longing pines (2007, 505-512).

The longing, sexually-tainted as it is, reminds us of such modern moments of voyeurism like Marcel Proust's complex scenarios of love and jealousy in *In Search of Lost Time*. That Satan is self-obsessed is obvious. Yet what makes the above scene, and such similar ones, more than problematic is that in fact he *temporarily* does not have any supernatural powers whatsoever. In other words, his vision is limited and his feelings are too human. Temporarily because he is curiously enough also capable of shape-shifting whenever he wants to. Not only is there a modality of the visible in Satan's ineluctable vision, but there is also failed recollective analepsis. We wonder why he does not immediately recognize Sin and Death at the gates of Hell (2007, 2.741-45). Here when Satan addresses Sin as "Dear Daughter, since thou claim'st me for thy Sire" (2007, 817) he takes up the role of a father – as he had previously the role of a jealous lover. Carey is right in saying that "The fallen Satan is, we gather, a creature of moods, apprehending reality through mists of self-deception and forgetfulness" (1999, p.

166). Such mixed feelings engage the readers, and may help our "affective experience" expand (Tayefi & Nazemianpour, 2024, p. 22).

Satan's *Āz* is comparable to Macbeth's ambition, but also to epic traditions of name and glory. The book is placed on the fault line between two traditions. The classical epics of Homer and Virgil treat *kleos* and *gloria*—immortal fame won by martial or civic excellence—as the engine of heroic action. The Christian Middle Ages, by contrast, redirect longing toward beatific union with God, demoting secular fame to "windy applause". Milton's Renaissance inherits both impulses. Humanist pedagogy urges young men to imitate Cicero and achieve *virtù*, yet Reformation theology warns that all merit is finally grace. In fact, when Milton announces his purpose "to justify the ways of God to men" (2007, 1.26), he claims an ambition more colossal than any classical bard: to interpret providence itself. That claim at once risks pride and registers a distinctively Protestant confidence in individual vocation. The stage is set for an epic that will dramatize ambition's upward arc and catastrophic overreach.

Milton was a lifelong polemicist steeped in classical epic, and he knows exactly how martial grandeur shapes affect. The fiery assembly in "Pandæmonium" (2007, 1.242-330) mimics the catalogues and war-councils of *The Iliad*; the blank verse is studded with Homeric and Virgilian similes that liken rebel angels to leviathans, Titans, and embattled Romans. Such analogies mobilize what Northrop Frye calls the "heroic inventory" of Western literature, so that the reader's cultivated admiration for defiant warriors transfers almost automatically to Satan. Even more powerful is Milton's decision to grant his antagonist interiority. In Book IV Satan, perched on Mount Niphates, delivers a soliloquy that oscillates between self-pity ("Me miserable!" 4.73) and frost-bitten remorse ("Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" 4.75). That candor is unequalled by any other fallen spirit and, for two books, unmatched even by Adam and Eve, whose thoughts we do not yet overhear directly. We are placed in the paradoxical position of knowing Satan best just as we are told to abhor him most.

Yet Milton continually disciplines this sympathy. Narrative asides ("So spake the apostate Angel, though in pain" 1.125) and evaluative epithets ("vaunting", "impious") puncture the self-

fashioned heroism. Equally instructive is the syntax of Satan's rhetoric, which often ascends on hypotactic wings only to collapse into equivocation: "All is not lost—the unconquerable will… / And study of revenge, immortal hate, / And courage never to submit or yield" (2007, 1.106-8). The litany sounds Homeric until the final phrase exposes an ugly, infantile obstinacy. Milton thus stages a contest between our spontaneous aesthetic allegiance to grandeur and our critical duty to perceive ethical deformity. Satan teaches readers the first lesson of *Paradise Lost*: sympathy, while natural, is not self-validating; it must undergo reason's purification.

The epic's primary case study is Satan, "to whom the almighty power hurled headlong flaming" (2007, 1.45). In Book V Abdiel recounts how the archangel's ambition germinates: "Who can in reason then or right assume / Monarchy over such as live by right / His equals?" (2007, 5.794-796). Satan's syllogism exposes the mutation of lawful emulation into usurpation. Heavenly hierarchy, meant to distribute love, is reimagined as tyranny; freedom becomes the freedom to rule. The epic poet lets us glimpse an initial plausibility: if angels are self-moving intellects, why should one be supreme? Yet the logic already detaches the creature from its origin, forgetting that angelic being itself is a gift. Ambition thus arises not merely from envy but from a philosophical error—a failure to acknowledge contingency.

Cast into the sulfurous lake, Satan stages an astonishing rhetorical coup. His opening speech converts total rout into the first chapter of an insurgent epic: "All is not lost; the unconquerable will, / And study of revenge, immortal hate… / Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven" (2007, 1.106-124). Ambition here performs a psychological miracle. By redefining "service" as servility and "reign" as autonomy, Satan transforms pain into proof of superiority. The speech enacts the very thing it praises: the architectonic power of the will to build a private kingdom out of ruin. Milton underscores the thinness of the boast—Hell is a "dungeon horrible"—yet he also grants it tragic grandeur.

Later, as Satan courts legions with promises of "another world" he dismisses the Son's investiture as a novel decree: "This day hath God appointed… / For sure to all he else in Heaven shall declare / Who is above all." What Satan calls a promotion is in fact a revelation of eternal filiation. Ambition's intellectual symptom is

historical myopia: it cannot imagine that an unoriginated order could precede its own vantage. Thus, Milton identifies a cognitive distortion at the heart of pride—history is rewritten as the present's opportunity.

Book IV offers the most intimate depiction of ambition. Standing on Mount Niphates, Satan experiences "the hell within him" and nearly repents. He calculates, however, that to beg pardon would still leave him "the same" a subject; therefore "all hope excluded" he reaffirms his raison d'être: "To reign is worth ambition though in Hell: / Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven." The repetition signals fixation. Ambition has ossified into identity; without the striving to be highest, Satan literally does not know who he is. We feel the claustrophobia of a will trapped in its own echo chamber, observing that the vaunted freedom to reign produces only necessity: he *must* oppose. Aspirational latitude shrinks to a single compulsive gesture—negation.

Despite everything what draws the reader toward the character of Satan is his mysterious inwardness. Such an inwardness is also true about Adam, so much so that he is compared to Hamlet – prince of consciousness. Stevens writes:

One of the most important of Milton's allusions to *Hamlet* . . . occurs in *Paradise Lost* when Adam, after the poem's notes have turned "tragic" (9.6), laments humankind's first fall from grace. Adam, who with Eve is one of creation's two "lords of all" (4.290), now finds himself in the same kind of impasse as Shakespeare's prince. While Hamlet wonders whether he should take arms "against a sea of troubles" (3.I.60), Adam feels himself already tossed "in a troubled sea of passion" (10.718). (2023, p. 74)

Previously, in discussing Manicheanism we highlighted the word "passion". As much as being about dualistic passions, *Paradise Lost* is about sympathetic inwardness, a mode of affection similar to what Shakespeare's characters possess.

5. Conclusion

This essay has argued that *Paradise Lost* continually stages a conflict between a professed metaphysical monism and an experienced moral dualism, and that the most incisive way to see this conflict is through the Manichaean figure of Āz as it is refracted through Milton's Satan. Milton's prose theology insists that the "whole man" is one substance of body, spirit, and soul; yet the

poem's most powerful scenes expose passions that divide, double, and pull toward contrary poles. The result is a hybrid representation: Satan is made legible both as a doctrinally negated adversary and as a dramatically intensified agent whose restless desire at once seeks the Light and rages against it.

The evidence traversed here shows how poetics and affect carry the dualist pressure. The exaltation scene designed to secure unity instead inaugurates division; God's decree that promises an "individual Soule" occasions Satan's sense of being "impaired" and catalyzes the jealous drive that we have aligned with Āz (envy as injured merit turned ambition). Milton's language marks this fracture everywhere: the punning of sun/Son names the lure of radiance and the wish to occupy it; the proliferating or signals a postlapsarian cognition split by incompatible values; and the Book IV simile—wolf *or* thief—juxtaposes instinctual hunger with calculating greed, two complementary faces of Āz. Imagery of fire figures desire as luminous yet errant, a Zoroastrian-Manichaean emblem converted into epic dynamism. At the same time, the poem's monist commitments do not disappear; they surface in Raphael's account of angelic embodiment ("total they mix … desiring"), which collapses a strict spirit/matter binary even as it intensifies the drama of passion.

A second strand of the argument concerned sympathy. Milton repeatedly disciplines our attraction to Satan with evaluative asides and ethically charged epithets; nonetheless, by granting Satan unmatched interiority for two books, the poem recruits the reader's affective participation. The paradox we identified, that is, Milton's design to justify divine ways versus the narrative's power to elicit identification, suggests that the poem performs not a simple theodicy but an aesthetic theodicy: it trains readers to test their immediate allegiance to grandeur against reasoned judgment. In this training, Āz is crucial, for it names the impulse that makes Satan at once compellingly human and theologically perverse.

This Manichaean lens neither claims Milton for heresy nor reduces the poem to doctrinal allegory. Rather, it clarifies how Persian Manichaean concepts, transmitted as they were through late antique and medieval channels, sharpen the poem's representation of desire, injury, and rebellion, and why the epic oscillates between repudiation and tragic admiration. Reading Satan as an Āz-like

hybrid illuminates the otherwise "marvelous scandal" of his presence: his passions dramatize the poem’s constitutive rift between experiential dualism and metaphysical unity, and thereby expose the difficulty of any theodicy that must pass through human feeling.

Juxtaposing Milton's intentions with the connotations of narratorial choices proves the "hybrid" nature of the character of Satan. Satan's dualism reflects Milton's moral dualism. However, it appears that Milton tries hard to gloss over such dualistic rifts by giving the epic a sort of metaphysical monism. The main conflict arises as the effect of these two stances, that is, moral dualism vs. metaphysical monism. Manicheanism best sums up such a fractured perspective, especially as it is shown in the hybrid figure of *Āz*. Milton's design is to justify the ways of God, but his performance is something else.

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