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### Critical Analysis of Content and Illustrations in *Paradise Lost*'s Adaptation

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* excels beyond the works of other authors that we read in class (ENG 243) like Dante and Homer not only by its poetic structure and grammatical usages but also by its magnificent imagery and content. These characteristics inspired me to want to work on an adaptation and produce illustrations of *Paradise Lost*. I chose to create an adaptation of *Paradise Lost* to focus exclusively on the story's antagonist Satan. Some focal points in this adaptation included the time when Satan and his friends battle against the angels of Heaven; the period in which Satan and his army are sent to hell; and the moment when Satan tempts and persuades Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Although there were many defining and important moments in the poem, the focal points that were mentioned previously helped to truly define Satan's personality and characteristics.

The battle among the angels, for example, provided a glimpse of Satan's willingness to defeat God and to wreak havoc in Heaven. When Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, he wanted Eve to suffer the punishment of God – so that she would share his pain and sufferings. Satan's exploration in hell after the Fall also allowed us to realize the questions that were in his mind. In my adaptation during the *Falling Friends* scene, Satan asked, "Why abandoned them into distant land but not destroyed them?" He did not understand God's intention to punish him in a torturing environment that he would never die. "Why set them to be stuck in hell forever for a crime they think they are not deserving to be blamed?" he asked further. Satan asked those questions because he sensed that he was not in control of his own

will and power. Rather, it was God who was the mastermind behind all things including fate and free will.

We also discussed a lot in class about the notion of epic – how it was broadly defined and misunderstood. As an epic, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* did not need to be a story of an epic hero who fought in hard-won battles to earn honor and glory. *Paradise Lost* focused instead on Satan and his exploration of life in Hell and Heaven. My adaptation, which I argue was loosely based on Milton's original work, challenged the notion of epic too. Take for instance, the scene titled "She plucked, she ate," when Eve finally bit the forbidden fruit. I included the scene in my adaptation because it dealt with the problem of free will and fate. God, maker of all creations in Heaven and Earth, knew everything that went on in the present and the future. However, he did not rush in to prevent Eve from being lured by Satan. God had the power to stop Satan from tempting Eve to bite the forbidden fruit. I included in this specific scene the question, "Why did the Father, he who is loving and possesses immense power to see even beyond the current pace in time, not warn the victims of the serpent's crime?" Free will and agency were central issues in both my adaptation and the original work.

Creating an adaptation of *Paradise Lost* was also challenging. The original classic was widely known for stretching the fundamental basics of sentence structures and word choices to the breaking point. For instance, Milton barely used any quotations for characters' speeches. A single sentence, connected by commas and semi-colons, might extend from one to two pages long. This makes reading *Paradise Lost* somewhat tedious and discouraging. Hence, my adaptation was an exciting take on John Milton's classic. My decision was to embrace the use of

modern English and simplified narrative. The goal was to ensure that the story was easier to understand and still making sure that important scenes in *Paradise Lost* would not be lost.

Some of *Paradise Lost*'s best quotes cannot be omitted from this adaptation. One was spoken by Satan, saying, "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven" (Book I, Lines 254-255). It was one of *Paradise Lost*'s most famous lines because it represented (1) how great the mind of Satan was; (2) how deeply paradoxical Satan's sentences could be; and (3) how much we come to learn Satan's personalities and brilliance. If I chose not to include this quote in my adaptation, then John Milton's powerful quote and original poetry work might be loss. Many scenes from the original *Paradise Lost* story had also been omitted because the adaptation was not meant to be treated as an actual overview of the story. Doing so would be a commitment that required extensive hours to reword and make illustrations. I also chose not to cover too few moments in the story; the story would not make sense otherwise. What's more important in my version of *Paradise Lost* was how Satan's decisions and actions affected others around him – both his friends and enemies. An argument could be raised, pointing out that I did not include Satan's important soliloquy from Book IV. However, I wanted the adaptation to be the story of Satan and his actions that impacted others, like the angels of God, his own friends, and Adam and Eve.

In terms of illustrations, I initially started out drawing on a physical sheet of art paper, but when they were scanned into the computer, most drawings lost quality and true color. Hence, all illustrations had to be produced digitally on the Surface Pro laptop. Each artistic drawing was drawn by hand with a paint brush on a touch screen. Most of the drawings were meant to be abstract and not to be too realistic because *Paradise Lost* was a work of poetry and

not non-fiction. The original coloring concept was black-and-white. However, some illustrated scenes would not make sense to be have a black-and-white color. Therefore, I decided to use vivid and bright colors. These illustrations were not inspired by the works of any other artists. They were my way of demonstrating an alternative version of John Milton's classic *Paradise Lost* in a less difficult and more approachable manner for all audiences. In bullet points were discussions of how each drawing of characters and sceneries was designed and illustrated.

- *Cover Image*: Against the dark background was a fiery gulf of fire, a resemblance of how Hell looked like as viewed by the perspective of Satan and the descriptive narration made on Book I from lines 192 to 235. Throughout these lines, there were occasioning mentioning of the "wave", "dark designs", "pool", "flames driven backward slope", "lake with liquid fire", and "wind". These descriptions were combined to create the cover image for my adaptation. Additionally, each character of the title "Paradise Lost" was written in capital letter and in white, and had a few stokes of red lines and dashes added to create an atmosphere of torture, pain, and fear.
- *God*: is described as one who sits "above these heavens to us invisible or dimly seen in these tiny lowest works" (Book V, Lines 156-160). Therefore, in my painting of God, the only way to identify Him was to observe the white object in the middle against the blue patches of paint.      *Son*: I drew God's Son as the operator of Earth. He did not create the Earth, but when God had begotten him and positioned him as the controller of all things, it made sense for me to visualize the Son as holding the globe. And Paradise, to me, seemed like a place that was green and bright – so yellow and green fit the description.

- *Satan*: I pictured an image of Satan as a serpent watching over Heaven, a place he was once loved. I drew him as a red snake because within him there was evil and no joy. He had flames all visible above his upper body, meaning that although he was able to find his way back to Heaven, he would still forever belong in Hell. As Satan watched over Heaven's outer edge, he tried to a channel to break in.
- *Adam*: Throughout Book I from lines 285 to 290, Adam was described as having "nobler shape", "tall", "naked", "pure", and "true authority in men." I pictured him roaming freely in the garden that God created for him and his wife Eve. As he walked towards the bright sun, we could see the clear blue sky and tall thick leaves that covered the bottom part of his naked body.
- *Eve*: In Book I, lines 298, Eve was valued for her "softness", "sweetness", and "attractive grace." I pictured her as walking behind thick patches of flowers and dark green leaves. Roses would only compliment her good looks and presence even further.
- *Hell*: Liked how I came to visualize Hell for my drawing of the cover image, the descriptions of Hell ("dark designs", "flames driven backward slope", "lake with liquid fire") were all used to recreate the Hell that Satan and his other angels first toured after falling from Heaven. In "Strangers in A World of No Light" scene on the website, the background was an image of tall, fiery gulf of fire that were visible against the dark sky. Although Milton narrated Hell as "yet from those flames, no light but rather darkness visible" in Book I from lines 62 to 63, it would not make sense to have only a black background behind the text. I believed that making the flames visible would make the illustration more meaningful and impacting.

- *Heaven*: Book IV described that the edge of paradise had a large hill that was covered with bushes and trees. Book V mentioned that there existed an “ocean brim” (lines 139-140). I had in mind a picture of a large land mass that was green and full of dark, green trees. Towards the left of the illustration was the appearance of a bright sun, casting its bright lights on the bright blue sea that touched the edges of paradise.
- *Battle Among the Angels*: The battle scene between Satan’s army and that of God was one of the most important sequence in *Paradise Lost*. I initially wanted to draw individual angels holding swords and using bows and arrows to fight against each other, but I later decided to draw a canvas painting of two colors (blue and red) striking against each other. Blue symbolized the angels of God, while red referred to the evil and devious army of Satan. I did not know how to represent “flaming arms” as described in line 15 to 17 of Book VI. I thought the closest replication abstractly would be a yellow dash line going across against the red and blue colors.
- *Satan Bleeds*: In Book VI, when Michael cut through the right side of Satan’s body, nectarous substances that only angels could produce were “oozing” out. Because it was nectar-like, I vision the substances being a mixture of orange, red, and yellow colors. I did not want to illustrate blood drops as red because otherwise it would have been oriented more towards humans rather than angels.
- *The Son Ends the War*: Book VI mentioned the Son ride a chariot that had rapid wheels. In line 751, the wheels of the chariot were described as having flames behind them. Therefore, I drew a blue chariot (blue representing Heaven’s good deeds, in my opinion) and had the wheels be burning in flames. The white dashes to the upper right corner of

the illustration represented arrows that the Son was shooting at the rebellious angels, as described in Book VI in line 849.

- *Plucking the Apple*: I originally wanted to capture the moment when Eve plucked the forbidden fruit from the tree. But, I think the best illustration would be what was left of the fruit after Eve had taken a bite. Milton's description of Eve's action was so quick and short, and that made me realize that the illustration for this important moment in *Paradise Lost* should also be simple and grand.

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* was a challenge in and of itself that tackled how we came to understand what an epic really was. My adaptation raised the problem further by trying to include in every scene questions that the characters asked (either to God or to themselves) about free will and agency. Having read *Paradise Lost*, it appeared none of the characters were truly given freedom to pursue their own goals. God was in control of everything from the beginning to the end. Any "epic" would unlikely have a problem like this in its own plot, but *Paradise Lost* was different. My adaptation was not crafted to hide the problem that an epic had. It was meant to raise the issue such as free will and agency further so that these challenges would be more visible to more audiences, especially ones that prefer *Paradise Lost* in simpler words.