

Analysing Milton's Paradise Lost as an Allegory of socio-political anxieties during the Restoration period (post-Republican) in England

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Abstract. *John Milton's Paradise Lost (1667) is often approached as a theological epic concerned with the "Fall of Man", divine providence, free will and redemption, but the poem also functions as a profound political allegory emerging from the turbulent historical circumstances of seventeenth-century England. Written by a committed Puritan intellectual who had actively supported the English Commonwealth and defended the execution of Charles I, the epic bears the imprint of the anxieties generated by the English Civil War, the Puritan Revolution, the Commonwealth and the Restoration of Charles II. This paper argues that Paradise Lost simultaneously operates as sacred history and political commentary. Through the depiction of cosmic conflicts between God and Satan, Milton dramatizes contemporary debates concerning liberty, authority, monarchy, conscience and rebellion. While the epic ultimately justifies divine authority, it also grants Satan a renaissance humanist psychology along with a strong rhetorical power and autonomy like never before. The resulting ambiguity allows Milton to encode his own political disappointments within a theological framework. The paper further explores how Milton transformed classical epic conventions through Christian subject matter and examines the allegorical acronym "PARADISE" as a framework for understanding the poem's engagement with the period of Restoration in England.*

Key words: *Paradise Lost, Political Allegory, English Civil War, Puritan Republicanism, Restoration England.*

Introduction

The publication of *Paradise Lost* marked a decisive moment in English literary history. Milton undoubtedly inherited the traditions of Homer and Virgil yet sought to create a distinctly English epic grounded in Christian values rather than pagan mythology. Noteworthy, the epic emerged during a period of extraordinary political upheaval. England witnessed civil war, the trial and execution of King Charles I, the rise of a Puritan republic and finally the restoration of monarchy in 1660. Milton was not at all a detached observer of these events. He served the Commonwealth government and produced numerous political tracts defending republican principles and opposing absolute monarchy. Consequently, *Paradise Lost* cannot be separated and ignored from the ideological tensions that shaped its author's life. The heavenly conflict between God and the rebel angels frequently mirrors the political controversies of seventeenth-century England. The poem can thus be analysed as a vast symbolic theatre in which theological questions intersect with political anxieties. Rather than presenting a simplistic allegory, Milton constructs a multilayered narrative in which cosmic history and contemporary politics continually illuminate one another.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, analytical, and interdisciplinary legal-literary research methodology to examine *Paradise Lost* as a political allegory of Restoration-era socio-political anxieties. Rather than analyzing the epic purely through formalist or theological lenses, the

research adopts a historical-materialist and new historicist framework that situates literary text within its specific socio-political context. The methodology operates across three main dimensions:

Textual and Formal Allegorical Analysis: The primary text of *Paradise Lost* (1667) is systematically analyzed alongside Milton's earlier prose tracts—specifically *Areopagitica* (1644), *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), and *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660)—to establish structural and linguistic parallels between Milton's explicit political philosophy and his poetic encoding [1].

Historical and Contextual Mapping: The study uses a contextual approach to map key thematic elements of the epic (such as the War in Heaven, Pandemonium, and the Fall) onto historical developments between 1642 and 1660. This includes the English Civil War, the trial and execution of King Charles I, the establishment of the Commonwealth, and the Stuart Restoration.

Comparative Philosophical Framework: The paper integrates seventeenth-century political theory by contrasting Milton's republican ideals with the ideological positions of contemporaries such as Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*), James Harrington (*The Commonwealth of Oceana*), John Locke, and Algernon Sidney. This interdisciplinary synthesis evaluates how Milton dramatizes competing concepts of sovereignty, liberty, resistance, and tyranny.

Milton, Puritanism and the Revolutionary Imagination

Milton's Puritan convictions profoundly influenced his literary and political thought. He believed that liberty was inseparable from moral responsibility and that individual conscience possessed sacred significance. During the revolutionary decades, Milton emerged as one of the most articulate defenders of republican government. His opposition to tyranny and arbitrary power informed his understanding of both politics and theology. Many scholars have noted that Satan often appears to articulate arguments resembling republican critiques of monarchy. His famous declaration that it is "*better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven*" echoes the language of resistance employed during the English Civil War. Yet Milton simultaneously exposes the contradictions inherent within Satan's rhetoric. The rebel leader speaks the language of liberty while constructing a system of manipulation and domination. Thus the poem dramatizes the danger that revolutionary ideals may degenerate into new forms of tyranny. The apparent struggle for emancipation ultimately produces another form of domination. In this respect Milton offers a profound critique of revolutionary failure. Political movements may begin with genuine aspirations but degenerate into authoritarian structures when guided by pride rather than justice [2].

Theological War as Political Allegory

The conflict between God and Satan in *Paradise Lost* has long been interpreted not merely as a theological drama but as a profound political allegory reflecting the ideological struggles that shaped seventeenth-century England. Milton composed the epic after witnessing the English Civil Wars (1642–1651), the execution of Charles I in 1649, the establishment of the Puritan Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell, the collapse of the republican experiment and the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Consequently, the cosmic conflict of *Paradise Lost* repeatedly evokes the anxieties surrounding sovereignty, resistance, liberty and political legitimacy that dominated Milton's historical moment. The war in Heaven thus becomes a symbolic arena in which contemporary debates concerning monarchy and republicanism are translated into theological terms. While God presides over a hierarchical universe founded upon divine order and obedience, Satan emerges as a rebel who challenges established authority through arguments invoking liberty, self-determination and resistance to perceived tyranny. Such rhetoric inevitably recalls the language employed by many critics of Stuart absolutism during the decades preceding the Civil War[3].

Milton's political engagement is evident from the opening books of the epic. When Satan addresses the fallen angels in Book I, his speeches echo the vocabulary of revolutionary resistance.

Declaring that “*The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven*” (*Paradise Lost*, I.254–255), Satan asserts a form of intellectual independence that resonates with republican notions of individual autonomy. More strikingly, his famous declaration, “*Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven*” (I.263), transforms theological rebellion into a political rejection of subordination. Post-modern critics have frequently noted that such sentiments resemble contemporary arguments against arbitrary monarchy. Yet Milton deliberately complicates this resemblance. Satan’s language initially appears attractive because it borrows the rhetoric of liberty, but the poem gradually reveals the corruption concealed beneath his revolutionary posture. Thus Milton distinguishes between legitimate resistance to tyranny and self-serving rebellion motivated by pride[4].

The political significance of Satan’s rhetoric becomes clearer when considered alongside Milton’s prose writings defending the Commonwealth. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), written shortly after the execution of Charles I, Milton explicitly argues that rulers derive authority from the people and may be removed if they become tyrants. He famously writes: “*It is lawful, and hath been held so through all ages, for any who have the power, to call to account a Tyrant or wicked King.*” This assertion embodies the republican principle that sovereignty ultimately resides in the governed rather than in a monarch claiming divine right. The language of resistance articulated in this treatise bears a striking resemblance to the ideological concerns dramatized in *Paradise Lost*. However, Milton carefully avoids making Satan a straightforward republican hero. Instead, Satan becomes an example of how the language of liberty may be corrupted by ambition and egotism. In this respect Milton critiques not only monarchy but also the dangers inherent in revolutionary movements themselves. Moreover, the political allegory becomes particularly significant when examined against the background of the English Civil Wars. The conflict between Heaven and Hell frequently resembles a civil war rather than a struggle between foreign enemies. The heavenly host is divided internally, much as England itself had been divided between Royalists and Parliamentarians. In Book V, Abdiel’s confrontation with Satan reflects debates concerning obedience and resistance that dominated political discourse during the 1640s. Abdiel rejects Satan’s claims of self-generated authority and insists that legitimate freedom exists within lawful obedience: “*Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou dispute/ With him the points of liberty?*” (V.822–823) The question encapsulates one of the central tensions of Milton’s age: whether liberty consists in freedom from authority or in obedience to just authority. Political theorists such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Algernon Sidney later provided competing answers to this question[5].

The heavenly war described in Books V and VI has often been interpreted as an allegorical reflection of the military conflicts that accompanied the establishment of the Puritan Republic. Milton’s description of celestial armies deploying in ordered formations recalls contemporary accounts of Civil War battles. The rebel angels organize themselves under military banners: “*Their mighty Chief/ With all his Potentates to Council call’d.*” (I.794–795)

The elaborate military imagery throughout Book VI resembles the disciplined New Model Army established by Parliament under Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell. The emphasis upon organization, ideological commitment and military professionalism would have reminded Milton’s contemporaries of the Puritan forces that defeated the Royalists. Even more revealing is Milton’s depiction of the invention of cannon by the rebel angels in Heaven. Satan’s followers introduce unprecedented weapons: “*A Triple-mounted row of pillars laid/ On wheels.*” (VI.482–483)[6]

The resulting destruction evokes the technological violence that characterized the Civil Wars. Milton transforms contemporary military innovations into a symbolic representation of political conflict, suggesting how civil strife disrupts the natural order. Some scholars have also observed that the grotesque spectacle of celestial artillery may reflect Milton’s disillusionment with the violence that accompanied revolutionary politics. The Restoration of 1660 profoundly shaped Milton’s perspective when composing *Paradise Lost*. Following the return of Charles II, many republicans experienced political defeat, persecution and disillusionment. Milton himself was

briefly imprisoned and narrowly escaped execution. These experiences contribute significantly to the poem's pervasive atmosphere of loss and exile. Satan's fallen condition after the war in Heaven bears striking similarities to the position of defeated republicans after the Restoration. His lament: "*Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell*" (IV.75), can be interpreted as expressing the psychological despair of those who witnessed the collapse of the Commonwealth. Yet Milton refuses to equate republican defeat with moral righteousness. Satan's suffering results from pride and self-deception, thereby distancing the poet from simplistic political allegory[7].

The influence of contemporary political philosophy further illuminates these tensions. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) argued that social order requires absolute sovereignty to prevent civil war. Hobbes viewed rebellion as a threat to stability and believed that subjects must obey sovereign authority. In many respects, Hobbes's political theory resembles the hierarchical order represented by Heaven. However, Milton fundamentally disagreed with Hobbes regarding the nature of liberty and conscience. Whereas Hobbes prioritized security and order, Milton consistently defended moral and intellectual freedom. John Locke, writing somewhat later in the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), articulated principles that also resonate strongly with Milton's earlier republicanism. Locke argued that government exists through consent and that tyrannical rulers may legitimately be resisted. Although Locke wrote after Milton, both thinkers participated in an intellectual tradition challenging the doctrine of divine-right monarchy. Similarly, Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government* defended republican principles and justified resistance against tyranny. Sidney's insistence that liberty is incompatible with arbitrary power parallels themes already present in Milton's political writings.[8]

Among philosophers contemporary with Milton, James Harrington deserves particular attention. In *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), Harrington advocated a republican constitution based upon civic virtue and balanced government. Harrington's vision of republican citizenship corresponds closely with Milton's belief that true liberty requires moral responsibility rather than mere absence of restraint. This distinction is crucial for understanding *Paradise Lost*, where Satan mistakes license for liberty while Abdiel embodies freedom grounded in virtue. Even Milton's own prose writings further provide indispensable evidence for interpreting these political dimensions. In *Areopagitica* (1644), perhaps the greatest defence of intellectual liberty in English literature, Milton declares: "*Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.*" This statement reveals Milton's conviction that freedom depends upon the exercise of reason and conscience. Such ideals reappear throughout *Paradise Lost*, particularly in God's insistence that angels and humans possess genuine free will. The poem repeatedly emphasizes that obedience has moral value only because it is freely chosen. Likewise, in *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660), written desperately on the eve of the Restoration, Milton warns against the return of monarchy: "*A king must be adored like a demigod.*" The statement implicitly reveals Milton's fear that monarchy encourages political idolatry and undermines civic liberty. Similar anxieties inform *Paradise Lost*, where excessive admiration for Satan contributes to the rebellion of the angels. The poem thus explores how charismatic authority can corrupt political judgment. Milton's sonnet *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont* also demonstrates his lifelong concern with tyranny and resistance. Condemning the persecution of the Waldensians, he invokes divine justice against oppressive rulers. Such works reveal a consistent political vision that values liberty, conscience and resistance to oppression while simultaneously warning against pride and fanaticism. A. W. Verity rightly observed that *Paradise Lost* cannot be separated from the political experiences that shaped its author. The epic derives much of its power from the fusion of sacred history and contemporary political memory. The war in Heaven recalls the English Civil Wars; the fallen angels evoke the fate of defeated revolutionaries; debates concerning obedience and resistance mirror controversies surrounding monarchy and republicanism; and the restoration of divine order reflects enduring questions about legitimate authority. Through this intricate allegorical structure, Milton transformed the turbulent history of seventeenth-century England into a universal meditation upon freedom, power, obedience and political responsibility. The result is an epic in which theology and politics become

inseparable, allowing the celestial rebellion to function simultaneously as a sacred narrative and as a profound reflection upon the revolutionary age through which Milton lived[9].

God and the Question of Monarchy

One of the most controversial dimensions of *Paradise Lost* concerns its representation of divine kingship. Some scholars have boldly argued that God resembles an absolute monarch. Others insist that Milton deliberately distinguishes divine sovereignty from earthly kingship. The distinction is crucial. God rules through omniscience, justice and providence but human monarchs possess none of these heavenly attributes. Milton's political writings repeatedly attack kings who claim divine authority without embodying divine justice. Consequently, the heavenly monarchy should not be interpreted as a direct endorsement of Stuart absolutism. Rather, Milton constructs an ideal model of authority against which corrupt political systems may be judged. However, Milton complicates any straightforward identification of God with earthly kings. Divine authority is presented as perfect, just and providential, whereas human monarchs often fail to embody such virtues. The distinction allows Milton to criticize Stuart absolutism while defending legitimate authority. The epic therefore explores the crucial question that haunted seventeenth-century political thought: when does authority become tyranny and when does resistance become rebellion?[10]

Milton as Satan: Ambition, Rebellion and Providential Design

Many of the Post-modern interpretations of *Paradise Lost* identify aspects of Milton himself within Satan. Such readings do not necessarily argue that Milton consciously intended Satan to be a self-portrait; rather, they suggest that the poet inadvertently invested the fallen archangel with elements of his own intellectual temperament, political experiences and revolutionary aspirations. Among the most influential critics to advance this perspective is Harold Bloom, who famously emphasized Satan's imaginative vitality and rhetorical power. Bloom observed that Satan frequently dominates the emotional and psychological landscape of the epic, often appearing more vivid, dynamic and memorable than the figures who are conventionally expected to embody heroism. Although Bloom never claimed that Milton explicitly endorsed Satan's rebellion against God, he argued that the poet's creative energies seem irresistibly drawn toward the rebel, granting him a complexity and grandeur that transcend simple villainy. From this perspective, Satan's extraordinary energy, indomitable will and refusal to accept defeat may definitely be interpreted as reflections of Milton's own political experiences during one of the most turbulent periods in English history. Historically speaking, Milton had actively participated in the revolutionary movement that culminated in the English Civil War and the execution of Charles I. As a committed defender of the Commonwealth and a passionate advocate of republican ideals, he devoted much of his intellectual career to challenging the legitimacy of monarchical absolutism. His political writings repeatedly celebrated liberty, resistance to tyranny and the right of a people to reject oppressive rulers. In this sense, Milton himself occupied a position analogous to Satan's within the theological framework of the poem: both became figures who dared to challenge an established sovereign power in pursuit of a radically different political vision. The parallels become even more striking when one considers the consequences of political failure. Following the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, Milton's republican dream collapsed. The monarchy returned, many of his political allies were imprisoned or executed and Milton himself faced persecution and public disgrace. Blind, politically marginalized and isolated from the centres of power, he witnessed the apparent triumph of the very institution he had spent decades opposing. This historical experience bears a remarkable resemblance to Satan's own condition after his expulsion from Heaven. Once a glorious archangel occupying a position of immense prestige, Satan finds himself cast into the desolation of Hell, stripped of authority and condemned to inhabit a realm defined by defeat and loss. Both figures become survivors of failed revolutions, haunted by memories of former greatness and confronted by the painful reality of political exile. Yet the analogy between Milton and Satan ultimately reveals the complexity of Milton's theological convictions rather than undermining them. While traces of Milton's revolutionary spirit may be discernible within Satan's

rhetoric and determination, the epic consistently demonstrates the destructive consequences of rebellion when it becomes detached from divine truth. Satan's apparent heroism gradually deteriorates into self-deception, narcissism and spiritual corruption. His journey throughout the poem is not one of liberation but of progressive degeneration. What initially appears as heroic resistance increasingly reveals itself as an inability to acknowledge reality and accept moral responsibility. In this regard, Milton may be using Satan as a means of critically examining his own revolutionary impulses. The fallen angel becomes a dramatic embodiment of the aspirations, frustrations and ideological tensions that had shaped Milton's political life, while simultaneously exposing the dangers inherent within those aspirations. This paradox is particularly significant when viewed against the backdrop of the Restoration. Milton could no longer openly advocate the republican cause with the same confidence that had characterized his earlier political pamphlets. Direct political criticism had become dangerous and potentially self-destructive. Consequently, *Paradise Lost* provided an alternative imaginative space through which the poet could revisit the revolutionary conflicts of his age. By transferring contemporary political struggles into a cosmic and theological framework, Milton transformed recent history into sacred allegory. The war in Heaven, Satan's rebellion and the subsequent fall of the rebel angels become symbolic representations of the broader tensions between republicanism and monarchy, liberty and authority, resistance and obedience, that had defined seventeenth-century England. At the same time, Satan's character may be understood as a repository for Milton's unresolved political emotions. The fallen archangel articulates many of the ideals that animated revolutionary discourse: independence, self-determination, resistance to domination and the rejection of inherited hierarchy. His speeches often resemble the rhetoric of political revolutionaries who seek to overthrow entrenched systems of authority. Consequently, some Postmodern critics argue that Satan embodies those aspects of Milton's personality that remained dissatisfied with the outcome of history. The rebel spirit of Lucifer becomes a vehicle through which the poet could imaginatively continue the struggle against the forces that had defeated his political vision. Satan's relentless desire to recover a lost position and challenge an apparently invincible sovereign mirrors Milton's own longing for the restoration of the republican ideals that had been crushed by the return of monarchy. However, the epic never allows this revolutionary impulse to achieve complete victory. Satan's defeat is presented as part of a providential order that transcends human politics. From the perspective of divine omniscience, the rebellion was never capable of succeeding because it had already been incorporated into God's eternal plan. This theological framework permits Milton to preserve both his admiration for courage and his commitment to Christian orthodoxy. Satan can be granted grandeur, eloquence and psychological depth without being vindicated. His rebellion may evoke sympathy while still being portrayed as ultimately misguided. Such a dual perspective reflects Milton's own predicament as a defeated revolutionary who nevertheless remained committed to a providential understanding of history. The result is an epic characterized by profound ideological ambiguity. *Paradise Lost* simultaneously celebrates and critiques the revolutionary imagination. It acknowledges the emotional appeal of resistance while exposing the tragic consequences of rebellion. Through Satan, Milton explores the intoxicating attractions of political defiance, yet he also demonstrates how such defiance can become trapped within cycles of pride, resentment and self-delusion. Consequently, the poem functions both as a meditation on cosmic theology and as a subtle reflection upon the political traumas of seventeenth-century England. Therefore, the identification of Milton with Satan reveals the intricate relationship between literature, politics and personal experience in *Paradise Lost*. Satan emerges not merely as a theological antagonist but as a complex imaginative construct through which Milton interrogates his own revolutionary past. The epic becomes both confession and concealment, revelation and disguise. Beneath the universal narrative of Christian salvation lies a deeply personal engagement with political disappointment, ideological commitment and historical defeat. By embedding his revolutionary anxieties within the sacred drama of Heaven and Hell, Milton transformed the failures of his own age into a timeless exploration of ambition, rebellion, authority and the tragic costs of aspiring to change the established order[11].

The PARADISE Allegory of Restoration England

P – Puritan Collapse and Political Despair

The loss of Eden reflects the collapse of Puritan political aspirations following the Restoration. For Milton, England had abandoned a difficult but meaningful experiment in godly government. The expulsion from paradise symbolizes the national disappointment experienced by defeated republicans.

A – Autocracy versus Accountability

Satan's speeches echo anti-monarchical arguments, yet his government in Pandemonium rapidly acquires authoritarian characteristics. Milton thereby demonstrates how revolutionary rhetoric may conceal autocratic impulses. The tension reflects contemporary debates concerning accountable government and concentrated power.

R – Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy

Pandemonium's dazzling architecture and theatrical magnificence invite comparison with Restoration culture. Many critics have interpreted the infernal court as a satirical reflection of the luxurious and morally permissive atmosphere associated with Charles II's regime.

A – Allegory of Temptation and Traded Liberty

Adam and Eve voluntarily surrender their freedom through temptation. Likewise, Milton believed that the English nation voluntarily abandoned republican liberty by restoring monarchy. The Fall thus becomes a political allegory of collective choice and historical responsibility.

D – Divine Right versus Tyranny

The poem investigates competing theories of authority. God's rule is portrayed as fundamentally just and rational, while Satan's authority depends upon deception and self-interest. Through this contrast Milton interrogates contemporary claims regarding the divine right of kings.

I – Individual Conscience and Internal Liberty

Michael's promise of "*a paradise within thee, happier far*" carries immense political significance. External liberty may disappear, yet spiritual and intellectual freedom remain possible. This message would have resonated deeply with republicans living under Restoration rule.

S – Satanic Rhetoric and Political Propaganda

Satan's persuasive eloquence reveals the seductive power of political language. Milton had witnessed propaganda from multiple ideological camps during the civil wars. The poem repeatedly warns readers that rhetorical brilliance can conceal destructive intentions.

E – Exile of the Regicides

The expulsion from Eden parallels the exile, persecution and marginalization experienced by former supporters of the Commonwealth. Blind, politically defeated and vulnerable, Milton transformed personal and collective loss into epic poetry.

Milton's Transformation of the Epic Tradition

Paradise Lost revolutionizes the epic genre by replacing pagan mythology with Christian cosmology. Homer and Virgil celebrate military conquest and imperial destiny while Milton retains that epic scale, utilises elevated diction, formal invocations, catalogues and heroic action, but redirects these conventions toward theological inquiry. The poem's true battlefield is spiritual rather than geographical. In the same context, the conception of "heroism" becomes associated with obedience, patience and moral endurance rather than martial glory. By integrating biblical narrative with classical technique, Milton created what many regard as England's first grand epic that carries an eminent sense of Englishness, full of Christian values. Its grandeur established a powerful sense of English literary identity while simultaneously participating in a universal Christian tradition[12].

Englishness, Nationhood and Literary Legacy

Ultimately, *Paradise Lost* established a paradigm of literary grandeur that rivalled the monumental epics of classical Greece and Rome. Through this achievement, Milton demonstrated that England possessed a spiritual, cultural and theological narrative of sufficient magnitude to sustain epic treatment. The poem's profound influence transcended the boundaries of literature, leaving an indelible imprint upon visual art, political thought, religious discourse and intellectual culture. Successive generations of writers from William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley to Mary Shelley and the wider Romantic movement, engaged deeply with Milton's complex portrayal of rebellion, authority, freedom and obedience. Equally significant is the enduring critical fascination surrounding Satan, whose character has been variously interpreted as a villain, a tragic hero, a political revolutionary and a psychological archetype. The persistence of these divergent readings attests to the inexhaustible interpretative richness of *Paradise Lost*, a work whose intellectual depth and imaginative power continue to inspire vigorous debate and scholarly inquiry across centuries[13].

Results and Discussion

The allegorical analysis of *Paradise Lost* highlights how John Milton integrated his socio-political anxieties regarding the Restoration into his theological framework. By mapping the political transformations of 17th-century England—from civil war to republican collapse—onto a sacred cosmic conflict, the poem provides a multi-layered commentary on power, authority,

1. Rhetorical Duplicity and the Degradation of Republican Ideals

A critical outcome of this analysis is Milton's nuanced portrayal of Satan. While Satan uses classic republican arguments against tyranny—declaring that "The mind is its own place" (I.254) and "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven" (I.263)—his actions within Pandemonium reveal an autocratic structure masked by parliamentary rhetoric. Through this contrast, Milton illustrates how revolutionary movements can internalize the absolute power structures they originally aimed to dismantle[14].

Satan's political language is therefore significant not simply because it resembles the rhetoric of resistance, but because Milton gradually exposes the gap between political language and political practice. Satan promises freedom to the fallen angels, yet his leadership remains strongly hierarchical and dependent upon his personal authority. The infernal assembly consequently becomes a distorted reflection of political institutions: it appears participatory, but meaningful power remains concentrated around the charismatic leader. Milton thereby raises an important question about revolutionary politics: can a movement genuinely establish liberty if its leaders reproduce the structures of domination that they previously condemned?

2. Reconciling Divine Sovereignty and Human Liberty

The text distinguishes sharply between human kingship and divine authority. Unlike human monarchs who rule by arbitrary decree, God's authority in the epic is presented as inherently rational, just, and omniscient. Milton uses this distinction to defend his anti-monarchical stance: because no human monarch possesses divine perfection, claiming a "divine right" to absolute rule represents a form of political idolatry. Human governance must instead remain subject to accountability, moral virtue, and the preservation of individual conscience.

The analysis further demonstrates that Milton does not present liberty as unrestricted individual autonomy. True freedom in *Paradise Lost* is connected with reason, moral responsibility and the capacity to choose rightly. This distinction is especially important because Satan repeatedly confuses liberty with independence from every form of authority. Abdiel, by contrast, represents the possibility of maintaining freedom while recognizing legitimate order. The opposition between Satan and Abdiel therefore provides one of the clearest philosophical structures through which Milton examines the relationship between liberty and obedience.

3. The "Internalized Paradise" as a Response to Historical Defeat

The concluding books shift the political focus from structural governance to individual conscience. Archangel Michael's promise of a "paradise within thee, happier far" (XII.587) reflects the reality of post-Restoration republicans. With the collapse of the Commonwealth, Milton suggests that true liberty can no longer be guaranteed by external state institutions alone; it must be maintained through moral integrity, spiritual discipline, and intellectual autonomy[15].

This transformation from external political freedom to internal moral freedom represents an important development in the poem's political argument. Eden is lost as a physical and political space, but the possibility of moral autonomy remains. The individual therefore becomes the final site of resistance against despair and political defeat. For Milton, historical circumstances may destroy a political system, but they cannot necessarily destroy conscience. The movement from Eden to "paradise within" consequently transforms political disappointment into a philosophical argument about the endurance of inner liberty.

4. Pandemonium and the Politics of Charismatic Authority

The construction of Pandemonium provides another important result of the allegorical analysis. The infernal capital is presented through images of grandeur, organization, spectacle and political assembly. Its magnificence creates an impression of order and achievement, yet this external splendour conceals the moral corruption of the system. Pandemonium can therefore be understood as a political theatre in which authority is produced through spectacle and persuasion.

Satan's leadership demonstrates the power of charismatic rhetoric in shaping collective political consciousness. His speeches transform defeat into a narrative of resistance and present suffering as evidence of heroic independence. The fallen angels are persuaded not merely through force but through language. Milton thus reveals that political domination does not always operate through physical coercion; it can also operate through persuasion, ideological manipulation and the creation of attractive political narratives.

This finding is particularly relevant to the Restoration context. Milton had witnessed competing forms of political propaganda during the Civil War and Commonwealth period. By dramatizing the persuasive power of Satanic rhetoric, *Paradise Lost* explores how political language can simultaneously inspire resistance and conceal ambition.

5. The Fall as a Model of Political and Moral Responsibility

The Fall of Adam and Eve introduces another dimension to Milton's political allegory: the relationship between freedom and responsibility. Adam and Eve possess the capacity to choose, and their transgression therefore cannot simply be attributed to external coercion. Their fall demonstrates that freedom without disciplined judgment can produce destructive consequences.

This argument parallels Milton's treatment of political liberty. A political community may possess freedom from monarchy, but such freedom cannot survive without virtue, reason and responsible citizenship. The failure of the Commonwealth can consequently be read alongside the Fall as a warning that liberation from an oppressive structure does not automatically produce a just society. Political freedom must be accompanied by moral maturity.

The allegory therefore moves beyond a simple opposition between monarchy and republicanism. Milton's deeper concern is with the ethical quality of power and choice. Both political rulers and political subjects are subjected to moral judgment. Authority without justice becomes tyranny, while liberty without responsibility can become destructive license.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that *Paradise Lost* cannot be reduced to either a straightforward defence of monarchy or a straightforward celebration of republican rebellion. Its political allegory is deliberately complex. Milton presents rebellion as psychologically attractive while simultaneously exposing its capacity for corruption; he presents divine authority as legitimate while distinguishing it from imperfect human monarchy; and he presents liberty as essential while insisting that liberty requires reason, conscience and moral responsibility.

The poem therefore occupies an intellectually productive middle ground between political

resistance and theological submission. Its central political question is not simply whether authority should be obeyed or resisted, but what makes authority legitimate and what makes resistance morally defensible. In this sense, the Restoration provides the historical pressure behind a much broader philosophical investigation.

The results further demonstrate that Milton transforms historical disappointment into universal reflection. The English Civil War, Commonwealth, and Restoration remain identifiable within the poem's political imagination, but they are elevated into questions concerning sovereignty, freedom, responsibility, temptation, defeat and providence. The allegorical method thus enables Milton to preserve the memory of political conflict while giving it a theological and philosophical significance that extends beyond the seventeenth century.

Conclusion

Conclusively, *Paradise Lost* may be interpreted not merely as a sacred epic, but also as a profound political allegory, a national poem and a reflective meditation on historical loss and disillusionment. As we realise after deconstructing and analysing the epic completely; the theological framework of the epic carries a sustained and sophisticated engagement with the political and ideological upheavals that reshaped seventeenth-century England. The celestial conflict between God and Satan mirrors contemporary anxieties surrounding monarchy and republicanism, authority and liberty, obedience and individual conscience. Milton's own revolutionary experiences reverberate throughout the epic, most notably in the character of Satan, whose eloquent rhetoric, indomitable ambition and tragic downfall frequently evoke the predicament of the defeated republican cause. Yet Milton ultimately elevates political history into the realm of divine providence. Human rebellion, national catastrophe and personal suffering are subsumed within a vast cosmic order governed by the inscrutable wisdom of God. In this way, the poet transforms the turbulent realities of his age into elements of a universal spiritual drama. By concealing contemporary political concerns beneath the majestic veil of sacred narrative, Milton was able to engage with the controversies of his time while simultaneously transcending them. Through an extraordinary synthesis of Christian theology, classical epic convention, political reflection and national aspiration, *Paradise Lost* emerged as England's first truly monumental epic and remains one of the most enduring and influential achievements in the history of English literature.

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