

David Hazemali, Tomaž Onič

University of Maribor
Slovenia

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The Proud Prime Evil of Hell: Characterization of Satan as the Capital Vice of Pride in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

ABSTRACT

This paper looks into the characterisation of Satan as the Capital Vice of Pride in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. It thus supports the findings of Robert Charles Fox, who in his study *The Seven Deadly Sins in Paradise Lost* first thoroughly analysed and comprehensively presented this issue and its importance in Milton's epic. The authors of the study share Fox's belief that Milton consciously used the system of the Seven Capital Vices in his epic as a structural device to present the entire scope of evil to the willing reader, and he achieved this by giving Satan and six other major denizens of Hell each the characteristics of a particular Vice. In other words, each of the seven major diabolical figures that appear in *Paradise Lost* embodies or personifies one of the Seven Capital Vices. As the most eloquent and characteristically perfected of the diabolical figures of Hell, Satan embodies Pride, the prime Capital Vice.

Keywords: *Paradise Lost*; John Milton; The Seven Capital Vices; Satan; Pride

Napuhnjeno primarno zlo Pekla: Prikaz upodobitve Satana kot naglavne pregrehe napuha v Miltonovem *Izgubljenem raj*

POVZETEK

Članek analizira prikaz upodobitve Satana kot naglavne pregrehe napuha v *Izgubljenem raj* Johna Milтона. Posledično izčrpno podpira ugotovitve Roberta Charlesa Foxa, ki je v svoji študiji *The Seven Deadly Sins in Paradise Lost* prvi temeljito analiziral in predstavil sistem in pomen te tematike v Miltonovem epu. Avtorja razprave pritrjujeta Foxu, da je Milton zavestno uporabil sistem sedmih naglavnih pregreh v svojem epu kot mehanizem, s katerim voljnemu bralcu prikaže celoten spekter zla. To je dosegel tako, da je Satanu in ostalim šestim glavnim prebivalcem Pekla dodelil lastnosti posameznih pregreh. Z drugimi besedami, vsak od sedmih glavnih diaboličnih likov, ki se pojavijo v *Izgubljenem raj*, uteleša ali pooseblja eno od sedmih naglavnih pregreh. Satan kot najbolj prepričljiv in karakterni izpopolnjen od diaboličnih likov Pekla uteleša napuh, prvotni naglavni greh.

Ključne besede: *Izgubljeni raj*; John Milton; sedem naglavnih pregreh; Satan; napuh

The Proud Prime Evil of Hell: Characterization of Satan as the Capital Vice of Pride in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

1 Introduction: Statement of the Problem, Sources and Authentication

In his comprehensive study *The Seven Deadly Sins in Paradise Lost*, Robert Charles Fox (1957, 194) argues that Milton consciously used the system of the Seven Capital Vices in Book II of his epic poem as a structural device to present the entire scope of evil to the “willing” reader,¹ and he achieved this by giving Satan and six other major denizens of Hell each the characteristics of a particular Vice.² In other words, each of the seven major diabolical figures that appear in *Paradise Lost* embodies or personifies one of the Seven Capital Vices.

The system of Vices or Sins (the difference between the two will be addressed later) has existed for over a thousand years, but it was Fox who first identified their characterization in Milton's epic and analysed it in great detail. For the purpose of this study, we have analysed the characterisation of Satan in isolation from the rest of the poem.³ This decision enabled us to analyse the character more thoroughly, but it also hindered us from stressing the significance of the Seven Capital Vices in *Paradise Lost*, which is not man's exposure to them, but, as Fox puts it, “man's conquest of them” (Fox 1957, 194), where Satan, the embodiment of the prime Capital Vice, plays a fundamental role.

2 The System of the Seven Capital Vices

2.1 The Origins

Human beings have always acknowledged the concepts of right and wrong, despite their original lack of specifics about what right and wrong are. This changed with the implementation of proto-governments and especially with the widespread appearance of proto-religions, when both ends of the concept's spectrum were specified differently across various cultures. However, all societies have been driven, in Rogers' words, by the same “dynamic power”, which is “the sense of fault or error” (1907, n.p.).

People of all positions and degrees of intellect have always had sins commonly associated with the problem of evil, but before the creation of the Catholic Church no true system existed to define them. That changed around 590 CE when Pope Gregory the Great specified seven of them; thus, the traditional list of the Seven Deadly Sins was established. According to St Gregory, they are the following (Latin original in italics, other variants of a particular sin in brackets): **Pride**/*Superbia* (after the 13th Century, also Vainglory), **Envy**/*Invidia*, **Wrath**/*Ira*, **Sloth**/*Acedia*, **Greed**/*Avaritia* (Avarice or Covetousness), **Gluttony**/*Gula*, and **Lust**/*Luxuria* (Lechery). They

¹ Crosman (1975, 371–81) makes a valid point, arguing that when we refer to the reader in *Paradise Lost*, we should have in mind one that is willing “to make the effort of understanding,” not the usual unreal, idealistic one.

² Fox believes that the Seven Capital Vices appear three times in total and that their implementation serves two purposes. Only the first depiction of the system is discussed here. The second depiction of the Vices is within Satan himself, meaning each of the Capital Vices can be identified within his character. The third time, the system appears in a historical pageant when Archangel Michael shares his vision of the history of man. Here, Milton used the system as means of creating theme and structure for Michael's narrative (1957, n.p.). In this paper, only the first depiction of the system is considered.

³ Where it was crucial, however, especially when tackling the background of Satan's nature, the limits were expanded.

are “the source of all sins” (Saunders 2016, 1), which is why they are also called Capital Sins, where *capital* derives from *caput*, Latin for *head*. Another befitting adjective is Cardinal. There are seven of them because of the mystical number’s immense appeal to Christian writers and those of other religions, but it is impossible to determine the exact source for their enumeration (Rogers 1907, 2). The first five of them are spiritual, since they affect the soul, while the last two result in pleasure to the body, so they are carnal (Fox 1957, n.p.).

St Gregory believed Pride to be the one great Sin from which all other Capital Sins derived. The human soul, “once set in motion by Pride, follows a psychological path” through all the Sins, similar to a domino effect (Fox 1960, 276). Another definition delineates Pride as “an inordinate desire for one’s own excellence” (Saunders 2016, 1; quotation from *Handbook of Moral Theology* by Dominic Prummer). According to Saunders, a person who succumbs to Pride considers himself or herself completely divine. It is easy for a person to succumb to Pride, Saunders continues, because of the wounds left behind by the original sin. It “makes us hate our equals because they are our equals; our inferiors from the fear that they may equal us; our superiors because they are above us” (2016, 1).

This Gregorian sequence was confirmed in the 13th century by St Thomas Aquinas, to whom we owe a great deal for his input on the entire Catholic doctrine of the Seven Deadly Sins (many of the above descriptions of particular Vices were first uttered by Aquinas). He insisted on replacing the word “sin” with “vice” when addressing this issue. He argued that a Capital Vice has an “exceedingly desirable end” (Saunders 2016, 1), which forces a person in desire of it to commit many actual sins. The sins that he or she does commit then either weaken or destroy completely “the grace of God within the soul” (Rogers 1907, 4), meaning there are two types of sins, depending on their severity and whether or not the person willingly and deliberately committed the sin. They can be either Venial or Mortal. Rogers (1907, 5) offers the following distinction between the two categories: “Venial sin is a disease of the soul, but is not its death, since the grace of God remains by which it may be cured. Mortal sin is, on the contrary, irreparable, and those who are guilty of it have lost every principle of vitality, and are spiritually dead.”

From the perspective of the Catholic Church, one must deliberately and willingly commit a sin in order for it to be classified as deadly. A severe, impactful consequence of his or her actions must also be visible (Rogers 1907, 6). It is crucial, however, to understand that from an ethical perspective, these Vices were perhaps regarded as condemnable by morally upstanding pagans long before St Gregory’s list came to be, since they “relate entirely to life and character” (Rogers 1907, 2), and as such were not created by the Pope, or by the Catholic Church, for that matter. They were not specified solely to limit the actions of people. Underneath their prohibitive nature also lies pragmatism and common sense.

Up to this point, we have used different collocations when referring to St Gregory’s list of sins. We have also used “sin” and “vice” interchangeably – both with a capital letter when referring to one of the seven from the list, while using lower case when referring to the actual sins that stem from those seven. We opted for a range of collocations primarily to differentiate the Pope’s view on his doctrine from that of Aquinas. Henceforth, all mention of the doctrine will be with the collocation “Seven Capital Vices”, and each of them will be referred to as a “Vice”. We are fully aware that the collocation “Seven Deadly Sins” is the more popular one when addressing St Gregory’s doctrine on sin, as it appears more often than the one we selected in all forms of human communication and expression. However, under the influence of Aquinas and William Saunders, we concluded that the collocation “Seven Deadly Sins” is inaccurate. “Deadly”, too,

is arguably a suboptimal choice, since not all Capital Vices result in the deadliest forms of their actual sins, as St Thomas pointed out in his *Summa Theologiae* (Saunders 2016, 1). It should be noted that, while carrying a certain weight from the theological perspective, the choice of name is insignificant for literary use; therefore, the varied options are a matter of preference.

2.2 The Seven Capital Vices in Paradise Lost

Sin is a complementary part of life, and as such, it is also present in literature (Rogers 1907, n.p.). St Gregory's doctrine of the Seven Capital Vices has been implemented in a great many literary works, especially after Aquinas affirmed its sequence of Vices in the 13th century.⁴ According to Fox (1960, 277), it was first followed by theologians Alcuin, Peckham, Hugh of St Victor, and St Bonaventure. The Vices then appeared in works intended for a broader selection of readers, like Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and *The Shepheardes Calender*, Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, and most noticeably, in Dante's *Purgatorio*.

Unlike other literary portrayals of the Seven Capital Vices, Milton implemented them in an epic poem in connection with traditional "epic warriors" (Baumlin 1987, 177). In Fox's words, he selected and characterized the seven major diabolical figures that appear in Books II around St Gregory's doctrine. Their different natures and rhetoric make each of the demons stand out in a particular way, reflecting the Capital Vices that lurk within them, while simultaneously forming a homogenous, more than a thousand verse-long characterization of St Gregory's doctrine (see Baumlin 1987, 177).

Baumlin (1987, 169) reports that in *Paradise Lost*, Milton retains St Gregory's sequence of Vices in the order in which his fallen angels appear in Books I and II. Satan, who appears and speaks first, is the embodiment of Pride. He is both the supreme ruler of Hell and the characterization of the Vice of all Vices. Beëlzebub, Satan's lieutenant who speaks next, is the embodiment of Envy. The three speakers in the Infernal council of Book II – Moloch, Belial, and Mammon – are the embodiments of Wrath, Lust, and Greed, respectively. Finally, at the end of Book II, Satan encounters Sin and Death at the gate of Hell, the two personifying Lust and Gluttony, in that order.

Taken in isolation, the selected depiction in Book II indeed exposes the reader to the entire scope of evil through the seven major diabolical figures of Hell, but this is evil only on the spiritual level, confounded within the boundaries of the unfaithful angels' prison. Satan, Beëlzebub, Moloch, Belial and Mammon, the five major devils which Milton borrowed from religious history, became symbols of their Vices. Their natures were consciously constructed around the first five Capital Vices – Pride, Envy, Wrath, Sloth, and Greed, in that order, which corresponds to the Gregorian sequence. These Vices are spiritual, meaning they affect the soul, and as symbols of these, the devils symbolize all the spiritual sins of man. Death and Sin, on the other hand, are also demonic figures, but they are not devils since they are not fully characterized spiritual entities. The personifications of the last two Capital Vices – Gluttony and Lust, which affect the body and are therefore called carnal – are depicted as non-historical allegories of a modified Christian and classical myth. Fox (1957, 194) thus concludes that the seven diabolical figures together represent the entire scope of evil, but only on the spiritual level. The following section focuses on one of the most memorable characters in English literary history – Satan, the prime evil himself.

⁴ There is a slight discrepancy between St Gregory's and Aquinas' views on the Vice of Pride, but this discussion exceeds the scope of this paper.

3 Pride in Satan

In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley says that “Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan in *Paradise Lost*” (quoted from Forsyth 2003, 1). In his *Die Räuber*, Schiller praises the cunning with which Milton transforms even the most docile reader into a fallen angel (Pavlič 2004, 1154). No matter the time or place, several generations of intellectuals across the globe have had, if limited to their core, two observations in common when addressing Milton’s Satan: that he is the most memorable character as well as the most controversial element of *Paradise Lost*; countless studies have been written on him, perhaps even more than on the epic itself. The study of Satan has produced schools, where each of the “warring factions” (Steadman 1976, 254) addresses the controversial character from their own perspective. Given such colossal literary and historical proportions, it would be nearly impossible to produce an all-encompassing study where each of Satan’s many characteristics would be addressed. In light of Fox’s doctoral thesis, only one aspect of the Arch Devil will be studied here in detail: his depiction as the symbol of Pride, the Capital Vice from which all other Vices and consequent actual sins arise.⁵ However, because of Satan’s character’s immense proportions and depth, his evolution throughout the poem (Steadman 1976, 293), and because Pride is far more complex than it may appear (Fox 1960, 261), we need at least a general understanding of Satan’s fundamental nature, the root of his evil, and role in the epic. Unlike other major denizens of Hell (whose natures are easily comprehensible and the roots of whose evil clear – they all derive from Satan), those of the Arch Devil transcend the text and require a more thorough understanding of the traditional interpretation of Pride. They also require St Augustine’s interpretation of the nature of evil (which became that of the Church itself). By the time we turn to *Paradise Lost*, the framework for the indication of Pride within Satan will already have been established.

In his *Moralia*, St Gregory explained *Superbia* or Pride on the basis of its effect on the soul who “possesses or believes to possess some good” (Fox 1957, 18). He maintains that the possession of a good evolves into the Capital Vice under four conditions:

when a person believes that this good comes from himself and not from God (originative pride); when he admits that it comes from God but believes that it is the due recognition of his own merits (meritorious pride); when he boasts of possessing a good which in reality he does not have (boastful pride); and when he despises others and wishes to be the sole possessor of this good (exclusive pride).⁶

These conditions were later acknowledged by other theologians and intellectuals, which in turn made them into a traditional concept in Christian ethics (Fox 1957, 19). St Augustine adopted this definition and linked the Capital Vice to evil itself. The Miltonic scholar we turn to here is Lewis (1961, 66):⁷

What we call bad things are good things perverted (De Civ. Dei, XIV, 11). This perversion arises when a conscious creature becomes more interested in itself than in God (ibid, XIV, 11) and wishes to exist ‘on its own’ (esse in semet ipso, XIV, 13). This is the sin of Pride.

⁵ Because Pride encompasses other actual sins and especially because the prime Capital Vice leads to other Capital Vices, the character of Satan embodies all of them (Fox 1957, n.p.).

⁶ The naming for the different types of Pride was taken from Fox (1960, 261).

⁷ The main reason we believe C.S. Lewis knew Milton better than most scholars is because like him, Lewis was a man of faith. Since *Paradise Lost* is primarily a Christian epic, some fundamental aspects of it – Satan being one of them – can only be understood in light of Christian theology.

The first creature who ever committed it was Satan 'the proud angel who turned from God to himself, not wishing to be a subject, but to rejoice like a tyrant in having subjects of his own'. (XIV, 11)

Lewis believes that Milton's Satan conforms to this description entirely, and so does Milton. The former argues that the Arch Devil's

prime concern is with his own dignity; he revolted because he 'thought himself impaired' (P.L. V, 665). He attempts to maintain that he exists 'on his own' in the sense of not having been created by God, 'self-begot, self-raised by his own quickening power' (V, 860). He is a 'great Sultan' (I, 348) and 'monarch' (II, 467), a blend of oriental despot and Machiavellian prince. (IV, 393)

Satan, however, was not always evil.

Pride began to form within Satan when Milton's God declared his son, the Messiah, the new leader of the angels. Lucifer, which was his name before the Fall, "through pride...thought himself impaired" (Book V, line 665). For us, it is less important how he fell, but why he became evil in the first place. "Thou God", St Augustine argues, "has made all creatures good He foreknows that some will voluntarily make themselves bad..." (Qtd. in Lewis 1961, 67). This is the key to understanding Satan and contains the reason for his exclamation, "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am hell" (Book IV, line 75), which is from his perspective the drama of *Paradise Lost* (Hughes 1956, 80). Lucifer was not created evil; nothing was. He consciously chose to be evil by perverting the good within: "Evil be thou my good" (Book IV, line 110), and now he must carry this evil with him throughout the poem (Lewis 1961, 94–103). He was also the first being in Heaven who became evil, a fact given to us by Archangel Michael when in the middle of the battle in Book VI he addresses Satan as "Author of evil, unknown till thy revolt" (Book VI, line 262). It is a fact because Michael speaks nothing but the truth, as all faithful angels of Milton do (Hughes 1967, 17).⁸ Satan, then, has become a degraded Lucifer, a "horrible co-existence of a subtle and incessant intellectual activity with an incapacity to understand anything" (Lewis 1961, 99). He has become evil,⁹ a "glory obscured" (Book I, line 591), spreading only lies and deceit (Lewis 1961, 102) – but by his *own* will (99).

So far, we have established the underlying cause behind his evil nature: it was Pride that perverted the good in him and turned him against his creator. With this knowledge, we can now address the final crucial aspect of his character before turning to the poem: i.e., Satan's role in *Paradise Lost*.

If one of Milton's intentions for the depiction of the system of the Seven Capital Vices in Book II is to submit the reader to the entire scope of evil (Fox 1960, 276) and through it recreate in his or her mind "the drama of the Fall, to make him fall again" (Fish 1998, 1), then the purpose of his Satan (and other major evils of Hell) is to make that happen. As the most eloquent and characteristically perfected of the diabolical figures of Hell, he *does* succeed with practically every inexperienced reader, he *does* bring them to his side, which is why some prominent

⁸ Regarding the root of evil in Heaven, Hughes makes an interesting remark: he argues that Satan did not plant evil thoughts in all the rebel angels; some were corrupt even before the rebellion, and Milton consciously believed this to be so. Hughes claims this on the basis that "Milton had exegetical authority to support him" (Hughes 1956, 17). In *Paradise Lost*, however, the Arch Devil was undoubtedly the first, the root of evil in all others.

⁹ Evil, yes, but there is still some good in him, for evil cannot exist without good (St Augustine qtd. in Lewis 1961, 67).

individuals like John Beale have accused Milton of being “a poet too full of the Devil” (Forsyth 2003, 1), meaning he intentionally or unintentionally depicted Satan as the hero of *Paradise Lost* when clearly Adam or the Messiah should have played this role. Almost three centuries later, this controversy is still being discussed. There is logic behind this dispute, since Milton’s “theological polarity between a dynamic and plenitudinous evil and an unchanging and absolute good” (Widmer 1958, 263), the fundamental principle of his creativity, requires an in-depth understanding of Christian theology and dogma. Under the influence of Steadman and Lewis, our perspective on this matter goes as follows: Satan is *not* the hero of *Paradise Lost*; it was always Adam. There are (at least) three issues to consider here, the first being the definition of the word “hero” itself:¹⁰ according to Steadman, a hero is “a godlike *man* – a human being of superlative virtue or (metaphorically at least) of divine seed” (1959, 99). Satan is an angel, whereas the Messiah is of divine origin; thus, Adam is the only possible answer. The second issue revolves around the nature of Satan – which we have already addressed. By admiring Satan, one admires his misery, his lies and deceit, whereas Adam, on the other hand, is faithful, talks about Milton’s God, the stars, the angels, etc. – here, too, the difference between them is substantial and functions in favour of the latter. Finally, Milton himself points out that, while it is indeed interesting to read about Satan, actually *being* him is uninteresting and utter boredom (Lewis 1961, 102).

One must read only some 30 lines of the poem to see that Milton made sure there would be no doubt about the prideful nature of Satan, that he is the symbol of Pride itself. To the question “Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?” (Book I, line 33), the epic voice in the following lines replies

Th’ infernal serpent; he it was, whose guile
 Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
 The mother of mankind, what time his pride
 Had cast him out from Heav’n, with all his host
 Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring
 To set himself in glory above his peers,
 He trusted to have equalled the Most High,
 If he opposed; and with ambitious aim
 Against the throne and monarchy of God
 Raised impious war in Heav’n and battle proud
 With vain attempt.

It was indeed Pride that “had cast him out from Heav’n” (Book II, line 37), but we are also informed of other Vices and sins that resulted from Pride and acted as instruments of it: Envy, revenge (unmistakably the result of Wrath), guile, and deception (Fox 1957, 23). While these and other progenies of Pride help shape Satan’s character, especially Envy, we will analyse only the indications of the prime Capital Vice within the Arch Devil, and tackle other Capital Vices in the separate studies of the diabolical figures that embody them.

¹⁰ It is vital to understand that by “hero” we do not mean a Hellenic one like Achilles or Ajax, but a Biblical hero (Herman 1959, 13).

Satan conforms entirely to St Gregory's definition of Pride and undoubtedly manifests three of its four types – originative, exclusive, and through exclusive, also meritorious Pride (Fox 1957, 33), and arguably also the fourth, boastful Pride¹¹ (1960, 267). The species of Pride progress in a set pattern. First comes exclusive Pride, followed by meritorious and originative, and lastly – from a certain standpoint – boastful Pride. Chronologically, exclusive Pride comes first in Satan, when Raphael shares his account of the rebellion in Heaven (see Book V, lines 659–65):

...he of the first,
If not the first Archangel, great in power,
In favor and in pre-eminence, yet fraught
With envy against the Son of God, that day
Honored by his great Father, and proclaimed
Messiah King anointed, could not bear
Through pride that sight, and thought himself impaired.

A similar remark on Satan's insurrection is given by Milton's God to his Son (see Book V, lines 725–28):

...a foe
Is rising, who intends to erect his throne
Equal to ours, throughout the spacious north;
No so content, hath in his thought to try
In battle, what our power is, or our right.

That Satan cannot accept the Messiah as his new superior and decides to rebel against his creator is a physical manifestation of his exclusive Pride, followed immediately by a verbal expression of it when he addresses the assembled rebel angels. He succeeds in arousing in his legions his own repulsion from servitude and through it his exclusive Pride; however, there is one who does not succumb to the treachery. Immediately after the address, Abdiel rises and denounces the "argument blasphemous, false and proud" (Book II, line 809) in lines 822–25:

Shalt thou give law to God, shalt thou dispute
With him the points of liberty, who made
Thee what thou art, and formed the pow'rs of Heav'n,
Such as he pleased, and circumscribed their being?

With utter contempt, Satan refutes the faithful angel's call for humility by questioning their praised origin in Book V, lines 859–66 (Fox 1957, 35):

¹¹ Satan's boastful Pride is mostly only an "outward manifestation" of his originative Pride (Fox 1957, 33).

We know no time when we were not as now;
 Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
 By our own quick'ning power, when fatal course
 Had circled his full orb, the birth mature
 Of this our native Heav'n, ethereal sons.
 Our puissance is our own, our own right hand
 Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try
 Who is our equal....

The exclusive Pride once so profoundly visible in Satan has now evolved into something far more sinister. Not only does Satan disapprove of the Messiah's newly appointed position, he now also questions his creator. He questions the source of his power, his origin, and by doing so, he succumbs to originative Pride. What is more, by transcending into originative Pride, he not only ventures further away from his former self – the faithful, obedient Lucifer – but (un)intentionally also retains his exclusive Pride, for if Milton's God is not the Creator, then surely his Son does not deserve to have supremacy over the arch angels (Fox 1957, 35–36). While Book V only reveals the prideful (and other) characteristics of Milton's Satan, in Book VI they are for the first time openly manifested (Fox 1957, 36).

Before the great battle in Heaven, Raphael, another archangel, refers to Satan as “the proud / Aspirer” (Book VI, lines 89–90), confirming what the epic voice told us in the beginning of the poem. Here, Satan is no longer viewed as a rebel angel, but the evil that threatens creation itself, and a proud evil at that (Fox 1957, 37).

A similar remark is given to him by Abdiel, the angel who refused to succumb to Satan's rebellious counselling. At the onset of the first day of battle, he challenges Satan with the words, “Proud, art thou met?” (Book VI, line 131). Like Raphael, he, too, consciously continues to evade Satan's previous name, for in their opinion he has lost the right to it (Commentary by the editors in Milton 2008, 200). Firmly holding his ground, the “Archfiend” (Fish 1998, 18) in his reply in Book VI, lines 156–59, recalls how the day before

A third part of the gods, in synod met
 Their deities to assert, who while they feel
 Vigor divine within them, can allow omnipotence to none.

Blinded by the prime Capital Vice, Satan does not realize the true extent of his words. By calling himself and his followers “gods”, he reveals his originative Pride. What is more, in the last line, when he refuses to allow “omnipotence” to others, he unconsciously also reveals his exclusive Pride (Fox 1957, 37).

Milton masterfully wraps up the depiction of Pride in this Book by alluding with the action to the words of Solomon: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs, 16.18)” (Fox 1957, 38). In the three-day battle in Heaven, “the proud Crest of Satan” (Book VI, line 191) is first hit by Abdiel, resulting in a shameful stagger of the bearer. Next, Satan is humiliated by the powerful archangel Michael. Finally, on the third day, when the Messiah joins the conflict, the Arch Devil and his followers are banished to Hell (Fox 1957, 38).

By implementing this pattern, Milton depicted the consequences of Satan's Pride, which are, together with the origin traced in the previous Book, a prerequisite for understanding the actions and rhetoric of the Arch Devil in other Books, especially in I and II. Having considered all of the above, we can now analyse the symbolic characterisation of Pride in Satan as part of the system of the Seven Capital Vices that appears in Book II, with I functioning as an overture.

In Book I, which chronologically follows the great war in Heaven in Book VI, Satan finds himself in Hell, where he is shackled in chains. Whether or not these are physical or a mere metaphor for another means of imprisonment, it is Milton's God who deliberately removes them (Empson 1960, 37). Both Satan and his closest lieutenant Beëlzebub find themselves in a state of delusion in which they believe themselves (see Book I, lines 239–41):

...to have scaped the Stygian flood
As gods, and by their own recovered strength,
Not by the sufferance of supernal power.

It suddenly becomes clear to us what Lewis meant when he said that Satan possesses "an incapacity to understand anything" (1961, 99). Had we not determined the origin and the earlier manifestations of his Pride beforehand, along with what actually happened before the Fall, it would have been extremely difficult to comprehend the tragic mental state, the pity of the 'present' Satan. Lewis maintains that "in order to avoid seeing one thing he has, almost voluntarily, incapacitated himself from seeing at all" (1961, 99). The Hell that he carries with him is perhaps the ultimate manifestation of Pride.

In Book I, there are multiple occasions where Satan's Pride emerges from the text, especially the originative manifestation. Here (Book I, lines 116–19), Satan's actions become his rhetoric (Fish 1998, 17). In his first address to Beëlzebub, he asserts that

...since by fate the strength of gods
And this empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced...

Much as in the reply to Abdiel, here Satan exemplifies his originative Pride in denying having been created by a "personal Creator" (Fox 1957, 40). The dominant theme in this speech and in the next is, in Fox's opinion, his "determination to persist in evil and to pervert good to evil ends" (Fox 1957, 41). Why else would he be reassured that the demons need not worry about Milton's God's potential annihilation of each and every one of them?

In the following speech (Book I, lines 315–30), where Satan addresses his summoned "apostles" (Erickson 1997, 382) and millions of lesser (fallen) angels on "the bare strand" (Book I, line 379) of the infernal lake, an image that alludes to Jesus summoning his disciples at the Sea of Galilee, the prime Capital Vice is present, but in a manner different from what we have already established. Here, Pride "takes the form of an appeal to the pride of the fallen angels rather than an exemplification of pride on the part of Satan" (Fox 1957, 42). By using titles such as "Princes", "potentates", "Warriors," and "flow'r of Heav'n" (Book I, lines 315–16), the "great antagonist" (Williams 1945, 268) recalls his companions "to a sense of military obligation" (Steadman 1966, 564) and through it appeals to duty and shame (1966, 564). By doing so, Steadman maintains

(1966, 564), Satan can expect a fanatical response to his final shout at the end of his address, “Awake, arise, or be for ever fall’n” (Book II, line 330).

The assembly of the devils, which follows Satan’s rallying cry, is permeated with references to his Pride. The lexical choices in lines 527–28 (“...he his wonted pride / Soon recollecting...”), lines 571–72 (“And now his heart / Distends with pride...”), and lines 602–3 (“...brows / Of [...] considerate pride...”) are unmistakable (Fox 1957, 42).

Satan’s final speech (622–62) in Book I is unique in that it exemplifies the third type of Pride – boastful Pride. Fox (1957, 42) bases his argument on line 633, where Satan consciously lies about his rebellion having “emptied Heav’n.” One could argue that because of his ‘blindness’, Satan is unaware of the events of the great war, but that would be wrong, since the Arch Devil admits elsewhere that two-thirds of the angels in Heaven did not succumb to his treason.¹² Satan then states that the rebel angels (now demons) will rise once again and “repossess their native seat” (Book II, line 634), and to determine the strategy of his assertion, he calls for a council (1957, 43).

Book II opens with Satan’s address to the Infernal conclave, in which he again resorts to salutations “for rhetorical proof” (Steadman 1966, 565). Following St Gregory’s model of Pride, these appeals again manifest Satan’s bolstering Pride. On the surface, the Arch Devil’s opening address (Book II, lines 18–19) serves the purpose of boosting morale and introducing to the reader the infernal speakers, but underneath all this nobility lies his hidden agenda: to justify and fortify his position as the “monarch” (Lewalski 2003, 222) idol-breaker, this essay traces his very broad concept of idolatry throughout his poetry and prose. While his Puritan contemporaries thought of idolatry chiefly as pagan or Roman Catholic practices that offer an affront to God, Milton saw idolatry as the disposition to attach divinity or special sanctity to any person, human institution, or material object, and early to late he sought to eradicate that disposition in his readers. His focus is on the way idolatry debases and enslaves human beings and their societies. If worship and absolute obedience are offered only to the transcendent God and if his image is seen to reside in all human beings simply as such (not popes, kings, bishops, institutions, or sacred material objects:

Me though just right, and the fixed laws of Heav’n
Did first create your leader...

Fox (1957, 43) argues that at least by this justification, which is a manifestation of his originative Pride, Satan is correct, since he is superior to other denizens of Hell; however, what he forgets to mention (or ignores completely) is that his higher rank has been granted to him by Milton’s God, the Creator. In light of such overwhelming originative Pride that radiates from most of what he says in Book II, lines 19–24, it surprises us to find Satan making a concession in the continuation of his thought:

... next, free choice,
With what besides, in counsel or in fight,
Hath been achieved of merit, yet this loss

¹² When Death accuses Satan of taking with him “the third part of Heav’n’s sons” (Book II, line 692), the Arch Devil does not contradict (Fox 1957, 42).

Thus far at least recovered, hath much more
Established in a safe unenvied throne
Yielded with full consent.

In an apparent instance of humility, Satan confesses that his leadership was, after all, bestowed upon him freely by his ardent devotees. However, upon closer inspection, Fox (1957, 44) found that behind this mask of humility lies the fourth species of the Arch Devil's Pride – meritorious Pride: "If the position of leadership has been bestowed by others, Satan claims, it has been bestowed in view of what 'hath been achieved of merit:' it is but the just recognition of the nature of things" (1957, 44). It is, however, not a de facto manifestation of meritorious Pride; rather, it follows the same principle.

Following the apocalyptic defeat in Heaven, it is only logical that Satan expresses in his first address to the council the more subtle meritorious Pride. It would be unwise and foolish had he manifested straight away the far more extreme originative pride, which, following St Gregory's model, grants concession to none but the bearer (Fox 1957, 18–19). However, meritorious Pride within Satan does not last long, and at the end of his first speech in the conclave it gives way to boastful pride when he confesses that the position which was bestowed to him is not an enviable one in light of the dangers that come with it. Afterwards, he comes to an abrupt halt and awaits the counselling of other worthy members on which strategy to implement to win the war (1957, 45).

After the opinions of a select few, and the consequent decision to confront Milton's God by sending a volunteer on a covert operation to doom mankind, silence reigns in Pandemonium. Unsurprisingly, in an infernal version of Milton's God's request for a redeemer in Book III (Forsyth 2003, 18), it is Satan who answers Beëlzebub's call for a saviour. He steps forward and with "Monarchal pride" (Book II, line 428) addresses the council once more (Fox 1957, 45).

In his moment of glory, Satan continues his trail of thought from his opening address to the council members, only now there is nothing to prevent him from boasting. He scorns his followers for lacking courage, and boasts about the greatness of his own courage. He points out the hazards that await him on his journey, and how he is going to take them on. His boasting then evolves into exclusive Pride, when, at the end of his speech, he sarcastically dismisses the "mighty Powers, / Terror of Heav'n" (Book II, lines 456–57) and bids them "stay at home in order to ease their misery" (Fox 1957, 46). As much as he craves power, the exclusive authority to govern, so does he crave exclusive possession of courage. Since Beëlzebub and other denizens of Hell "Dreaded not more th' adventure than his voice / Forbidding" (Book II, lines 474–75), there is none to oppose him in his claims. They kneel before him (see Book II, lines 478–79)

With awful reverence prone; and as a God
Extol him equal to the highest in Heav'n.

Satan has achieved what he in his corrupt mind has craved ever since he succumbed to Pride: the power to govern and to be the sole possessor of courage. He could not stand the superior position of the Messiah in Heaven, so he became worshipped as a god in Hell (Fox 1957, 46). Through Pride, which in the two speeches in Book II manifests itself in all four types, and its consequent Vices and actual sins he makes his resolute assertion, "Better to rule in Hell, than serve in Heav'n" (Book I, line 263) a reality.

Finally, it is Satan himself who confesses to Pride as the root cause of his rebellion. Soon after he arrives in the newly-created world, he recalls (Book IV, lines 32–113) the time when he was once “glorious above the sphere of the sun, until he fell through Pride and worse Ambition,” which led to war against heaven’s “matchless King” (Fox 1960, 264). In the end, righteousness prevails over the insidiousness of Satan and his followers, but that part of *Paradise Lost* goes beyond the set scope of our analysis.

So far we have indicated the depiction of Satan as the symbol of Pride from a lexical perspective by following the chronological narrative from the emergence of Pride within him to the end of Book II, when the prime Capital Vice manifests itself entirely, and touched also his soliloquy in Book IV, where he himself admits to suffering from Pride.

4 Conclusion

We can conclude that Milton masterfully indicated the ultimate manifestation of Pride in Satan in all four of its species – originaive, boastful, meritorious, and exclusive – in the span of only two speeches, within the limits of a single Book. It would have been impossible, however, to fully grasp the extent of his Pride, had we not traced its origins back to the great rebellion in Heaven, analysed the traditional interpretation of the prime Capital Vice, and defined St Augustine’s interpretation of the nature of evil. By limiting this discussion to the explicit references to Pride, which are “repeatedly called to our attention by the words of the poet” (Fox 1957, 68) and finally by Satan himself (1960, 264), we have come to understand Milton’s Satan better. He is neither a hero, nor a fool, but, as Durr brilliantly asserts, “a dramatically realized and necessarily numinous embodiment of the dark movement of the total action of God’s providence” (1955, 526). As much as he is a fascinating character to read and write about, there is also a barren side to him. All he ever does in *Paradise Lost* is talk about himself, which is understandable, since he willingly chose to “be himself” (Lewis 1961, 102), but it dramatically affects the dynamics of his character. Beneath the proud, radiating monarch of Hell, there is Lucifer trapped within a prison of Pride and Envy, his own Hell. We conclude with a quote from Williams (1945, 268), who better than anyone captures the far-reaching impact and overall poetical value that is Milton’s Satan:

The result is a real triumph of artistic handling, though it can hardly be called invention, unless subtraction rather than addition is the main quality of invention. At any rate, all the dramatic intensity which results from the envy of Satan is present in *Paradise Lost*. The language is largely scriptural, and so it can offend no one, whether orthodox or heterodox. Nor has Milton denied himself any advantage that might come from the alternate motivation from pride. Both are represented in *Paradise Lost*. Without sacrificing the characterization of Satan as a proud rebel, without having to invent where invention is hazardous, Milton still avoids all contradictions and inconsistencies, both of narrative and religious beliefs, and achieves a solid and convincing motivation of the great antagonist.

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