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### Playing with Fire: the Gunpowder Plot and Milton's Changing Conceptualization of Terrorism

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TRINITY COLLEGE

Senior Thesis

Playing with Fire: the Gunpowder Plot and Milton's Changing Conceptualization of Terrorism

submitted by

Nichola A. Clark, Class of 2012

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for

the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

2012

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## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction.

The political context in which Milton lived and worked has fascinated critics for centuries. Much of that critical attention has focused on the influence of the English Civil War on Milton and his works, particularly *Paradise Lost*<sup>1</sup>. This thesis looks instead at the much less examined role of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Milton wrote explicitly about the Gunpowder Plot in some of his earlier poems, most notably *In Quintum Novembris*. Although Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* several decades after *In Quintum Novembris* and still more after the Gunpowder Plot, the epic poem makes an explicit reference to gunpowder in the war in heaven. In this reference to gunpowder, along with other key textual clues, Milton implies that there is a discourse of terrorism that grew in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

Many consider the Gunpowder Plot to be terroristic in nature by today's standards<sup>2</sup>. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "terrorism" as:

The unofficial or unauthorized use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims; (originally) such practices used by a government or ruling group (freq. through paramilitary or informal armed groups) in order to maintain its control over a population; (now usually) such practices used by a clandestine or expatriate organization as a means of furthering its aims.

Indeed, modern scholarly conversation on terrorism agrees that there are, generally speaking, five elements involved in "terrorism": "(a) the use of force or violence (b) by individuals or

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<sup>1</sup> See Robin Grey, Anthony Welch, Peter Herman, Christopher Hill, D M Rosenberg, and Joan Bennett.

<sup>2</sup> See Robert Appelbaum, Antonia Fraser, Mark Nicholls, James Sharpe.

groups (c) that is directed toward civilian populations (d) and intended to instill fear (e) as a means of coercing individuals or groups to change their political or social positions” (Moghaddam and Marsella 16). Although the term itself (terrorism) did not exist in Milton’s lifetime, clearly the Gunpowder Plot (see description in “Historical Context”) fits within the basic definition. The literature that grew up around commemorating, dramatizing, and understanding the Gunpowder Plot contributed to what we might term a growing “mythography” (“a network of discourse and narrative strategies on the theme”, Appelbaum 465<sup>3</sup>) of terror. This mythography shaped the thinking of writers like Milton regarding the relationship of legitimate and illegitimate claims to power and authority. The Gunpowder Plot, in addition to the wealth of representative strategies associated with it, provided a useful and culturally resonant reservoir of associations that Milton well understood and exploited to their fullest extent to conceptualize the relationship of legitimate and illegitimate power. If we understand the surprisingly complex ways in which the Gunpowder Plot was re-presented in the seventeenth century, and how Milton in earlier poetry explored the Gunpowder Plot as a literary topic, we can then understand better how and why Milton incorporated elements of that mythography of terror into his great epic poem.

### *Historical Context*

For Catholic-phobic England, 1625 marked the beginning of several tense decades of history. King Charles I’s marriage to a Roman Catholic princess only further stressed the tension between the Protestant majority and Catholic minority. In times such as this, when Protestant England perceived a renewed threat from the Catholic Church, enthusiasm surrounding the Fifth

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from Zulaika and Douglas.

of November heightened (Fraser 291). The Fifth of November was celebrated in remembrance of God's deliverance of England from the Catholic empire, for it was in the early hours of the Fifth of November in 1605 that a plot to blow up the building and leaders of Parliament was miraculously thwarted. This plot became known as the Gunpowder Plot, or sometimes simply the Powder plot, and it was discovered that a group of Catholic men, led by Robert Catesby, were responsible for its conception and attempted implementation (Sharpe 61-7). When officials followed up on an anonymous tip that a group of Catholics were going to try to blow up Parliament and discovered Guy Fawkes, one of Catesby's coconspirators, guarding the gunpowder in preparation for just such an explosion, the government officials interpreted the miraculous discovery as divine providence, a sign of the inherent rightness of English Protestantism. The Fifth of November was declared a holiday in order to give thanks to God for saving the King and country of England from the Catholic threat (Sharpe 79).

It was against this background of renewed vigor in celebrating the Fifth of November in light of a perceived Catholic threat that the seventeen-year old John Milton wrote *In Quintum Novembris* in 1626 (Bennett 250). Over the next several decades, Milton's political ideas and activities changed significantly, climaxing with his role in the English Civil war, specifically his appointment as Secretary for Foreign Tongues under the Commonwealth ruled by Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell (Parker 345), and bitterly ending with the restoration of the monarchy (Parker 567).

Milton's attitude towards regicide changed rather dramatically over the course of his lifetime; at the age of seventeen Milton condemned the gunpowder plotters for trying to kill the king only to later write a pamphlet condoning regicide during his service as Secretary for Foreign Tongues (Dzelzainis 78). Analyzing *Paradise Lost* in order to understand Milton's

perspective on the legitimacy of human authority will help explain this transformation from condemner to condoner of regicide.

### *Critical Context*

Dr. Stella Revard was the first critic to focus on the Gunpowder Plot, *In Quintum Novembris*, *Paradise Lost*, and the relationship between them. Revard asserts that young Milton was affected by the Gunpowder Plot (and the sermons that followed in its wake) and that this effect was overtly expressed in his gunpowder poems. More importantly, Revard recognizes Milton's reference to gunpowder within a context of secrecy in *Paradise Lost* as a clear reference to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Revard identifies significant parallels in the plots of *In Quintum Novembris* and *Paradise Lost*, specifically in regard to the way in which Satan, who appears in both poems, carries out his plots. Ultimately, Revard argues that Milton included gunpowder in the War in Heaven to remind his readers that Satan "remained alive and threatening in the political affairs of their own time" (76).

John Hale continues the conversation on the Gunpowder Plot, *In Quintum Novembris*, and *Paradise Lost* by looking at the character of Satan and recognizing differences between the villain in the earlier and later poem. Hale then focuses on Milton's relationship to the sources that influenced his Gunpowder poems and he identifies other gunpowder poems, college traditions, the Bible, George Buchanan, and early poets (Ovid in particular) as major influences on the young poet. Hale concludes that although Milton drew upon the influences of other Gunpowder poets, he stands out from them because of his reliance on personified spirits, the lack of historical details, and the number of works that he wrote about the subject.



The most recent contribution to the discussion of Milton, the Gunpowder Plot, and *Paradise Lost* was written in 2007 by Robert Appelbaum. Appelbaum is a critic from whom I have drawn the productive critical concept of a mythography of terror, which he uses to develop his argument that *Paradise Lost* largely draws on the gunpowder plot and its mythography “as a model for understanding the nature of evil” (477). Along these lines, Appelbaum asserts that Milton tries to understand terrorism in *In Quintum Novembris* but that the author grapples with the greater issue of the existence of evil in his later epic. A significant portion of Appelbaum’s essay is devoted to understanding and defining terrorism. Appelbaum makes the very astute argument that terrorism exists in unequal opposition to the other and in fact, terrorism exists *because* of the other and is targeted specifically *at* the other. Appelbaum defines terrorism as an act that strives to achieve a political goal, uses violence—specifically weapons of mass destruction—and targets non-combatants in order to achieve its goals (466).

Appelbaum’s analysis is very useful, but my thesis will further his argument by doing a more in-depth analysis of Satan as terrorist and will examine key passages from *Paradise Lost* that reflect the influence of the gunpowder mythography on Milton’s later epic. Additionally, I will explore the historical context of Milton’s life to better understand the deeper political motivations that could have lain behind Milton’s choice to associate Satan with terrorist plotters.

### *Methodology*

This thesis is thematically structured and focuses first on gunpowder, then on Satan, and finally on Eve. In the chapter on gunpowder, I explore on a basic level Milton’s association of Satan’s rebellious impulse with a specifically terroristic impulse, as reflected in his invention of

gunpowder. In this chapter, I also explore the significance of Milton's emphasis on the *origins* of gunpowder and its significance with respect to Milton's interest in the terroristic impulse as constituent of a perverse yet compelling inventive (perversion of creative) impulse.

The second chapter explores how Milton not only frames Satan's tactics in the War in Heaven as terroristic through the parallel elements of gunpowder, guile, and failure in the face of divine, but also how Milton's detailed representation of Satan's psychology and motivations draws on a rich tradition (of which Milton himself contributed) of using the tools of literary representation to excavate the "other side of the story"—the psychology and motivations that were imagined to lie behind the terrorist impulse. Through comparison of Milton's characterization of Satan in *In Quintum Novembris* to that in *Paradise Lost*, this chapter focuses on the Milton's growing interest in and engagement with the mindset of a terrorist, emphasizing the lack of overt violence associated with terrorism in the latter poem. The scope of epic enables Milton to greatly expand the representation of Satan in the gunpowder mythography into a full treatment of how righteous political reasoning is mingled with all kinds of problematic emotions (envy, sense of loss, despair). All of these emotions are driven by how acutely Satan feels personally and politically disenfranchised to the point that, although he knows deep down that his power is not equal to God's, he's willing to try and strike a symbolic victory that speaks the limits of divine power by continuing to use his powers of invention even after defeat. At the very least, through his association of Satan with the terroristic plotter, Milton secures in the reader's mind a specific idea about the nature of evil that Satan embodies.

The final chapter analyzes Satan's temptation of Eve as it relates to the concept of Satan as terrorist. While the story of Eve's seduction does not map neatly onto the Gunpowder Plot or our traditional understanding of "terrorism", there are some ways, outlined by the first two

chapters, in which we can draw certain parallels through Milton's depiction of Satan (specifically his terroristic tools and motivations). The power of suggestive association can lead us to think of the seduction of Eve as a particularly inventive act of psychological terrorism. This final chapter also analyzes Milton's political motivations for depicting Satan as he does in *Paradise Lost* and discusses the political implications of Satan's seduction of Eve with respect to (il)legitimacy of authority, specifically with respect to human law and institutions.

## Chapter One: Gunpowder *A Connection to Terrorism*

Gunpowder forever revolutionized warfare. American abolitionist Wendell Phillips claimed, “What gunpowder has done for war, the printing press has done for the mind”. While gunpowder has been a part of countless historical episodes, its most famous feature, at least in English history, is in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. The fear and hysteria created by the Gunpowder Plot affected English culture for centuries, though this panic was most tangibly felt in the first several decades immediately following the failed plot (Sharpe 290). The plot inspired many sermons, plays, stories, and poems and these works collectively comprise what we now call the mythography of the Gunpowder plot (Appelbaum 477). Although Milton’s later work *Paradise Lost* was most certainly *not* about the Gunpowder Plot, gunpowder does feature in Book Six of the epic poem. Milton’s use of gunpowder in *Paradise Lost* draws upon a gunpowder tradition of which he, at a much younger age, was a part. The inclusion of gunpowder connects Milton’s great epic with the Gunpowder Plot and, by extension, connects Satan with the terroristic figure of Guy Fawkes. However, *Paradise Lost* engages in an exploration of the origins of gunpowder with unprecedented depth and in doing so, Milton signifies his interest in understanding “the other side of the story” and, more specifically, the mindset of a terrorist.

*Paradise Lost* draws inspiration primarily from the Bible. There is, however, a clear reference to the Gunpowder Plot within Milton’s epic. In the description of the War in Heaven in Book Six, Satan reveals gunpowder as a sort of secret weapon, which he believes will enable him to win the war.

Which of us who beholds the bright surface  
Of this ethereous mould whereon we stand  
This continent of spacious heav'n, adorned  
With plant, fruit, flower ambrosial, gems and gold,  
Whose eye so superficially surveys  
These things, as not to mind from whence they grow  
Deep under ground, materials dark and crude,  
Of spirituous and fiery spume, till touched  
With heaven's ray, and tempered they shoot forth  
So beauteous, op'ning to the ambient light.  
These in their dark nativity the deep  
Shall yield us, pregnant with infernal flame,  
Which into hollow engines long and round  
Thick-rammed, at the other bore with touch of fire  
Dilated and infuriate shall send forth  
From far with thundering noise among our foes  
Such implements of mischief as shall dash  
To pieces, and o'erwhelm whatever stands  
Adverse, that they shall fear we have disarmed  
The thunderer of his only dreaded bolt. (6.472-491)

Although this weapon is never explicitly called gunpowder, it is clear, from the descriptions of a weapon that is “pregnant with infernal flame”, placed “into hollow engines long and round”, activated “with touch of fire” which “o'erwhelm[s] whatever stands adverse” with

“thundering noise”, that Milton was describing gunpowder. *Paradise Lost* was first published sixty-two years after that fateful November night when Guy Fawkes was caught making final preparations to blow up Parliament; gunpowder’s presence in the later epic is unexpected and rather anachronistic.

The inclusion of gunpowder in the War in Heaven draws inspiration from the Gunpowder Plot tradition, the early seventeenth-century practice of English authors penning Latin epigrams about the 1605 Gunpowder Plot. Critic Estelle Haan aptly observes

The existence of a gunpowder epigrammatic tradition owes its origins to two equally important facts: firstly, it seems likely that the composition of Latin epigrams on the subject was set as an exercise at seventeenth-century schools and universities; secondly as the event was, by government order, officially celebrated on an annual basis, it was quite natural that certain *literati* might experiment with Latin epigrams as a contribution, whether private or public, to that yearly commemoration. (xx)

Francis Herring started this Gunpowder Plot tradition in 1606 with the publication of his poem entitled *Pietas Pontificia*. Herring was followed by Michael Wallace (*In Serenissimi Regis Iacobi Liberationem*), Phineas Fletcher (*Locustae vel Pietas Iesuitica*), Thomas Campion (*De Pulverea Coniuratione*), and, in 1626, John Milton (*In Quintum Novembris*) (Haan vi). The use of gunpowder as a weapon is, of course, a critical feature of all of these poems. In *In Quintum Novembris*, Milton explicitly utilizes gunpowder on two occasions. When instructing the Pope of how to carry out the plot, Satan says of the “white-haired sages”, “All these you can blast to

ashes with a little well-placed powder underneath the buildings in which they are all convened’  
(lines 115-6). Later in the poem, the Pope gives similar instructions to Murder and Treason,

Go there at once, I command you, and find among the faithful  
associates in my plot and aids in its execution.

Then, with infernal powder of powder, let them be blown  
sky high, the king, the nobles, and the entire accursed race. (156-9)

In both the Gunpowder Plot tradition and *Paradise Lost*, Satan uses gunpowder as a weapon intended to bring about the destruction of his foe.

The gunpowder connection alone is significant but could more generally refer to the weapons used in general warfare; conspiracy and secrecy strengthen the connection between the Gunpowder Plot and *Paradise Lost*. Shortly after gunpowder is first mentioned, Milton describes the actions of the soon-to-be fallen angels:

So all ere day-spring, under conscious night  
Secret they finished, and in order set,  
With silent circumspection unespied.

...

Not distant far with heavy pace the foe [Satan and his army]  
Approaching gross and huge; in hollow cube  
Training his devilish enginery, impaled  
On every side with shadowing squadrons deep,  
To hide the fraud. ... (6.521-3, 551-555)

Having Satan's followers act "under conscious night" reminds the reader that these angels are preparing for battle under the cover of darkness; describing the squadrons as "shadowing" recalls this darkness. Milton uses diction such as "*Secret* they finished", "*silent* circumspection *unespied*", and "To *hide* the *fraud*" vividly evokes conspiratorial images of secrecy. Satan perceives the introduction of the Son of God as a threat to his own liberty ("Who can in reason then or right assume / Monarchy over such as live by right / His equals", 5.794-6). In response to this threat, Satan conspires to wage war in heaven and assume God's position (Satan and his party fought "To win the mount of God, and on his throne / To set the envier of his state, / the proud Aspirer" 6.88-90). Satan uses gunpowder as his "secret weapon" in his fight against God, but just as gunpowder failed the English Catholic plotters in 1605, Satan's use of gunpowder in *Paradise Lost* is ultimately unsuccessful and results in God deciding to send his Son to end the War in Heaven by expelling Satan and his crew.

The use of gunpowder in *Paradise Lost* links the epic poem to the Gunpowder Plot and this connection is strengthened by elements of conspiracy, secrecy, and divine intervention which all appear in both the Plot and the poem. This connection creates a clear association between the War in Heaven in *Paradise Lost* and the Gunpowder Plot, which is considered by many to be terroristic<sup>4</sup>. Because Satan is the inventor of gunpowder and it is he who plots to use it against his enemy in the War in Heaven, there is an unmistakable association with Satan and the Guy Fawkes or Robert Catesby figure of the Gunpowder Plot. Milton connects the War in Heaven to the terroristic Gunpowder Plot and by association, he identifies Satan as a terrorist.

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<sup>4</sup> Antonia Fraser's *Faith and Treason*, Robert Appelbaum's "Milton, the Gunpowder Plot, and the Mythography of Terror", and James Sharpe's *Remember Remember*.



Dr. Stella Revard rightly argues that associations of Satan with gunpowder confirm that Satan is the conspirator on the wrong side of history, a doomed loser in a struggle against divine providence. Milton's portrayal of Satan clearly reveals the author's concern for being on the side of "right" versus "wrong". However, there is much more to be said about the significance of the Gunpowder Plot connection in *Paradise Lost* and its implications with regards to Milton's concern for "right" and "wrong". Understanding these further implications, however, requires a closer analysis of Milton's emphasis on the origins of gunpowder.

John Milton was certainly not the only author to include the idea of the invention of gunpowder. Indeed, in 1532 Ariosto started the trend of casting Satan as the inventor of gunpowder. Book XI of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* describes:

th'infernal foe,  
Who fram'd this engine in the shades below,  
To imitate the forky bolt, that rends  
The fabled clouds, and from the sky descends;  
With this no less could human race deceive,  
Than with the fruit of old th'unhappy Eve:  
He, in our grandsires' time, to second birth  
Th'invention drew, to plague the sons of earth:  
This many a year engulph'd in seas was laid,  
Till, taught by him, a sorc'rer thence convey'd  
The pest abhorr'd; which first the Germans try'd,  
And, by the demon's aid, to arms apply'd. (152-63)

There are several parallels between this episode of Ariosto's work and *Paradise Lost*. Satan ("th' infernal foe" 152) wants to create a weapon that will rival God's lightning bolt ("to imitate the forky bolt" 154). Although the "invention" is not directly called gunpowder, the reference in line 162 to the weapon being first tried by Germans, a fact that would have been consistent with sixteenth century knowledge of the invention of gunpowder (Hoole 66), clearly establishes that Ariosto means for the "invention" to be gunpowder.

Although other poets and contributors to the Gunpowder tradition sometimes conceived Satan as the inventor of gunpowder, the depth with which Milton explores the origins of gunpowder in *Paradise Lost* is unparalleled. The gunpowder passage in Book Six (introduced in the beginning of this chapter) begins by describing the beauty of heaven, the "plant, fruit, flower ambrosial, gems, and gold" but then calls attention to the *origin* of this heavenly flora. These "gems and gold" of heaven grow "deep under ground, materials dark and crude"; it is not until these materials are touched "with heaven's ray" that they become the beautiful treasures of heaven. The material that is loaded into "hollow engines long and round", which we are to assume is gunpowder, is this "dark and crude" material *before* it has been touched with heaven. The material is "pregnant with infernal flame"; it has the potential to become life in heaven and will do so if touched by heaven's light. However, if that material were to be harnessed and exposed to fire instead of Heavenly light, it could be used to damage Heaven instead augmenting its beauty and splendor.

In order to better understand this idea of original or raw materials, it is helpful to briefly discuss Milton's monism<sup>5</sup>. Milton believed that all matter came from God and that consequently, matter was good (Hunter 196). Milton believed that while all matter was originally good, it could *become* evil. Michael expresses this idea to Adam in *Paradise Lost*, "O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom / All things proceed, and up to him return, / *If not depriv'd from good*" (5.469-71, emphasis mine). Here we see how Milton's understanding of monism derived from that of Proclus, who maintained, "the essence of evil is preference of the free will for evil over good...that evil is a deviation from good, a tending downward" (Hunter 195). Satan chooses evil and his inventions, just like his soul, are a deviation from and even a perversion of good.

The invention of gunpowder in *Paradise Lost* is a perversion of creation itself. After Satan introduces his new creation to his followers, the crew prepares to produce more of the weapon.

...in a moment up they turned  
Wide the celestial soil, and saw beneath  
The originals of nature in their crude  
Conception; sulphurous and nitrous foam  
They found, they mingled, and with subtle art,  
Concocted and adusted they reduced  
To blackest grain, and into store conveyed:  
Part hidden veins digged up (nor hath this earth

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<sup>5</sup> For discussion of Milton as a monist, see Phillip Donnelly's "'Matter' versus Body: the Character of Milton's Monism"; Marshall Grossman's *Authors to Themselves*; and Stephen Fallon's "Milton among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England"

Entrails unlike) of mineral and stone,  
Whereof to found their engines and their balls  
Of missive ruin; part incentive reed  
Provide, pernicious with one touch to fire. (6.509-520)

Satan and his followers take “the originals of nature” and, through a sort of alchemical process, transform the raw material into a weapon. Milton’s diction, his choice to describe “Sulpherous” and “nitrous” elements which are transformed with “subtle art” into “blackest grain”, reinforces the idea that the process by which gunpowder is created is pseudo-scientific in nature. By including the process of digging up “hidden veins” and assimilating them to “entrails”, Milton clearly emphasizes that this transformation from “crude” elements into gunpowder is a perverse act.

If we look more broadly at the epic poem, we notice that the invention of gunpowder fits into a greater theme of Satan’s creations described as a perversion of creation itself. When Raphael tells Adam about Creation, he describes God’s transformation of chaos into life.

... thus the earth,  
Matter unformed and void: darkness profound  
Covered the abyss: but on the watery calm  
His brooding wings the spirit of God outspread,  
And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth  
Throughout the fluid mass, but downward purged  
The black tartareous cold infernal dregs  
Adverse to life: then founded, then conglobed

Like things to like, the rest to several place  
Disparted, and between spun out the air,  
And earth self-balanced on her centre hung. (7.232-242)

God transforms “black tartareous cold infernal dregs” into life and with “virtue” and “warmth”. God brings “like” elements together to create the sea, land, and sky; he pieces together separate parts in order to create a whole.

A close reading of the creation of Pandaemonium reveals that Satan’s kingdom is a distortion of God’s creation. Satan and his fellow fallen angels find a mountain “that in his womb was hid metallic ore, / The work of sulphur” (1.673-4) and they “opened into the hill a spacious wound / And digged out ribs of gold” (1.689-90). The devils take God’s whole (the mountain) and separate it into parts by mining the gold. Milton describes the hole in the hill as a “wound” which associates a sense of pain with the act of removing the gold and also confirms that the whole entity of the mountain is injured. Milton makes a further reference to the creation story when he says that the devils dig out “*ribs* of gold”, which clearly alludes to the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib. While God uses a rib to create life, Satan uses a rib to decorate Pandaemonium. Where God brings different parts together to create a whole, Satan takes the whole and divides it into parts. God transforms chaos into order; Satan separates order in an attempt to revert God’s creation back to chaos.

If we recall the connection between the terroristic Gunpowder Plot and Satan’s use of gunpowder in the War in Heaven, and if we pay close attention to the details provided in the description of Satan’s creation of gunpowder out of the matter of heaven, we can arrive at the conclusion that terrorism is by definition a creative act, if a perverse one. The issue is that that

"creative" act can really only be made out of the materials of one's enemy; the terrorist aims to turn the material of his enemy against him. Invention, within a limited purview, is a type of creation and Milton uses gunpowder to portray Satan as an inventor. But rather than using his inventions to construct new, whole entities, Satan uses his invention to ruin God's creation. The terrorist "creates" fear, terror, destruction, shock that destabilizes systems of order and paradigms of meaning. Through the character of Satan, Milton identifies invention, specifically the use of creation against itself, as a salient feature of terrorism.

Satan's invention and utilization of gunpowder in the War in Heaven links this episode of *Paradise Lost* to a terroristic plot. By extension, this reference casts Satan into the role of terrorist. Milton's extremely detailed exploration of the origins and creation of gunpowder reveals the author's interest in the nature of terrorism and specifically, his identification of terrorism as a perversion of creation and more generally, evil as a perversion of good. Milton does not view "right" and "wrong" as necessarily separate entities but rather as being fundamentally connected; wrong is simply a perversion of right. Terrorism exists as "a fundamental but asymmetrical opposition" (Appelbaum 470); Satan is fundamentally but asymmetricaly opposed to God. The terrorist cannot win; Satan cannot defeat God. However, by using God's creation against itself, Satan can achieve a small victory: causing God pain by ruining the goodness and purity of his creation.

## Chapter Two: Satan

### *Exploring the Mindset of a Terrorist*

In one of the most recent critical discussions of Milton's Gunpowder Poems, John Hale claims that the character Satan in *In Quintum Novembris* differs so drastically from that in *Paradise Lost* that it is "naturally much more relevant and fruitful" (352) to compare *In Quintum Novembris* to Gunpowder poems by other authors, rather than comparing the two Miltonic Satans. Although the latter half of this chapter focuses on the differences between the two Satans, I disagree with Hale and assert that it is important to first observe the similarities between the characterizations as they reveal that Milton largely drew from his earlier conceptualizations of Satan that he initially developed while thinking in *In Quintum Novembris* quite explicitly about Satan as arch-terrorist. Indeed, as part of the focus of this thesis aims to examine Milton's changing understanding of terrorism, comparing the chief villain (terrorist, if you will) from Milton's most famous poem about the Gunpowder plot to the equivalent character in his epic poem about the Temptation and Fall of Man will prove to be a crucial analysis. In analyzing the similarities between the character of Satan in *In Quintum Novembris* and that in *Paradise Lost*, this chapter will focus on distinctly Miltonian descriptions and associations of Satan, the villain's intent and motivations, and the degree to which Milton considers the psychology of his mock-hero. Comparing the two Satans reveals Milton's increased desire to understand the circumstances and mindset of the terrorist. Through his flirtation with but general avoidance of violence in his later epic as well as his intense exploratory journey into Satan's

mind, the mature Milton reveals his refined perspective on terrorism and indeed, his greater understanding of the terroristic impulse.

Because *In Quintum Novembris* is significantly less popular, both generally and specifically within the realm of literary criticism<sup>6</sup>, I will take a few sentences to briefly describe its chief villain now. In Milton's Gunpowder Plot poem, Satan is described as "a terrible tyrant" (line 7) who hovers around the earth, searching for loyal followers. The reader is given very little information regarding Satan's background, we know only that he is exiled from Mt. Olympus (7-8). This Satan "creates confusion that leads to tumult and mortal combat" (17) and "beguiles with deceptions, corrupting their temptingly innocent hearts" (19). Satan comes across England and realizes that they praise the "one true god" (33) instead of himself. When he sees this country of people who are *not* under his control, Satan becomes irate ("His eyes are aglow with sinister flashes and from his jaws / there come the sounds of his gnashing teeth that sound like weapons, / lance meeting iron armor or sword smashing on shield", 38-40) and swears vengeance on those who defy him. Hale dismisses the Satan of *In Quintum Novembris* as merely an "allegorized pastiche" and further claims that the relations of the Satan in *In Quintum Novembris* to *Paradise Lost* "are almost wholly ones of difference" (352). Although there are certainly many significant differences between Milton's two Satans, there are distinctly Miltonian characteristics in both.

One of the "Miltonian" characteristics associated with Satan in both *In Quintum Novembris* and *Paradise Lost* is the association of Satan with a tiger on the prowl. In *In Quintum Novembris*, Milton describes Satan as a "Caspian tiger / relentlessly stalking its trembling prey" (22-3). In Book Four of *Paradise Lost*, Satan is described:

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<sup>6</sup> See Malcolm Cheek and David Quint for two of the few examples of criticism on *In Quintum Novembris*



...now he stalks with fiery glare,  
Then as a tiger, who by chance had spied  
In some purlieu two gentle fawns at play,  
Straight couches close, then rising changes oft  
His couchant watch, as one who chose his ground  
Whence rushing he might surest seize them both  
Gripped in each paw... (4.402-408)

This representation of Satan as predator, specifically a tiger who stalks man, his prey, seems to have appealed to Milton throughout his life since this description appears in works written at both a young age and also in his later years. This intensely predatory depiction of Satan emphasizes both the instinct-like ferocity of Satan and the helpless innocence of his victims.

There are Satanic similarities not only in the physical representation of Satan, but also in the allegorized nature of characters that Satan uses to carry out his plot. In *In Quintum Novembris*, Satan approaches Murder and Treason and asks them to help him carry out his plot to conquer the English. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan speaks with Sin (his daughter) and Death (his son by his daughter) and Sin unlocks the gates of Hell so that Satan may progress towards Earth to bring about the destruction of God's new creation. It is interesting to note that Satan, in both poems, interacts with the pair of allegorized characters when he is on the verge of committing an act of terrorism. This pattern of utilizing allegorized characters is not only interesting, but also useful in terms of understanding the idea of terrorism. By looking at the allegorized characters in *In Quintum Novembris*, Milton seems to associate the terroristic threat that Satan poses to the English as being fundamentally linked to murder and treason; for young Milton, these two sins

were the foundations of terrorism. Murder connotes a violent death and treason has political associations; the themes of violence and political motivation in *In Quintum Novembris* resonate with our modern day definition of terrorism (e.g. involving violence and used to bring about political change). The two allegorical figures of Sin and Death in *Paradise Lost* are much more general than those characters in *In Quintum Novembris*. Sin and Death seem to be associated with evil more generally rather than terrorism specifically (although terrorism is certainly a type of evil); however, this more generalized approach is appropriate given that *Paradise Lost*, unlike Milton's Gunpowder Plot poem, is not about terrorism as much as it is about the origin of sin and the fall of humankind.

Satan in *In Quintum Novembris* shares a few key characteristics with his counterpart in *Paradise Lost*. Secrecy, guile, revenge, the more uniquely Miltonian use of a tiger to illustrate Satan as a predator, and his use of allegorical conspirators all represent elements that young Milton identified as terroristic and then the mature Milton drew upon when creating *Paradise Lost*. While these similarities can be used to draw conclusions regarding some of Milton's basic understandings of terrorism, the *differences* between Satan in the two poems will help readers discern how that understanding changed over the course of Milton's life.

An interesting difference between the Satan in the two poems is his association (or lack thereof) with violence. In utilizing the image of Satan as a tiger stalking his prey, Milton evokes a strong flirtation between Satan and violence. Reevaluating the allegorized characters in the two poems reveals that Milton first establishes a strong association with Satan and violence only to back off of this association in his later epic. "Murder" and "treason" stir up powerful associations with violent behavior; while "Sin" and "Death" certainly carry sinister connotations,

their link to violence is much more ambiguous. In considering terrorism, the mature Milton placed significantly less significance on violence.

One of the most striking contrasts between the Satan of *In Quintum Novembris* and that of *Paradise Lost* is the former's considerable lack of detail. As previously mentioned, we have essentially no background on the Satan of *In Quintum Novembris*. Satan in *Paradise Lost*, by contrast, is one of the most famous characters in literature and almost the entire epic poem follows this mock-heroic character. Readers of *Paradise Lost* learn about Satan before his fall from Heaven, they learn of the war in Heaven started by Satan (as well as his motives for war), and they finally become aware of Satan's motivations for and plans of revenge. It is this background story and more intimate understanding of his thoughts that renders Satan, at times at least, a more sympathetic and even heroic character in *Paradise Lost* compared to his counterpart in *In Quintum Novembris*.

Of course, *Paradise Lost* is an epic; *In Quintum Novembris* is an epyllion. While the length of the poems largely accounts for the different amounts of detail given to the different Satan characters, Milton could have easily altered the point of view or added a few endearing details to *In Quintum Novembris* which would have made the villain of the poem more heroic; the converse point could be made for *Paradise Lost*. Milton *chose* to give very few details to Satan in his early poem and the details he did use clearly portrayed Satan as an absolute villain. Perhaps more consciously and significantly, Milton provides an intimately detailed account of a mock-heroic Satan in *Paradise Lost*. This choice to give a background story in the later poem signifies Milton's increased interest in understanding the "terrorist" figure.

Milton emphasizes the necessity of understanding circumstances before an act can be judged as good or evil, and indeed, *In Quintum Novembris* and *Paradise Lost* both reflect Milton's concern for being on the "right" side. In wars and acts of terrorism, particularly those of a religious nature, both sides claim to have God on their side; however, only one of them can actually be correct in this assertion. It is important to note that when Satan (in *In Quintum Novembris*) is angry because the people of England do not worship him and instead "gave their thanks / and praise to the one true god" (32-3), the arch-villain expresses his own personal thoughts. In this phrase, Satan indirectly reveals that he knows he is on the side of evil because he is diametrically opposed "to the one true god". Satan views Anglican England as the sole nation who fails to succumb to him. In response to this, Satan boldly declares "they shall not long defy me without paying the cost / that I shall impose on them who will know my vengeance." (45-6). Satan is angry at the people of England and desires to punish them for their defiance.

In *Paradise Lost*, although the reader is supposed to ultimately understand that Satan is on the evil side, the character of Satan does not view himself as evil, but rather as a victim of God's tyranny. Both Satans are angry at a perceived enemy and are motivated to commit acts of terrorism in order to avenge perceived wrongs. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan explicitly declares his intent:

...to confound the race  
Of mankind in one root, and earth with hell  
To mingle and involve, *done all to spite*  
*The great creator* (2.382-5, emphasis mine)

Satan punishes humankind because he is angry at God; in the sense that he challenges the authoritative governing figure, Satan's actions are politically motivated. Satan realizes, after the War in Heaven, that he cannot defeat God; Satan also realizes, however, that he can avenge his exile to Hell by corrupting God's newest creation, humans. Satan himself cannot regain Heaven, but he can deprive God of enjoying his beloved creation in Heaven. Satan aims to bring about the fall of man, *not* to punish man (as is the case in *In Quintum Novembris*), but to punish God. These differing objects of Satan's revenge signify Milton's more developed and complex understanding of evil actions. Satan in the Gunpowder Plot poem has less complex and more child-like motivation. The English have not actively wronged Satan, but rather the villain covets the nation since they are the only one not under his control. In order to simultaneously gain control of the nation and punish its people for their lack of loyalty, Satan sets out to blow up the leaders of England. Satan in *Paradise Lost* displays a chilling capacity for evil; his entire plan to bring about the downfall of humankind uses an entire race of innocent beings as a mere means to an end: causing God pain. When the circumstances surrounding an event or incident are described, we expect that they will make the actions surrounding that event understandable, perhaps, in some cases, even justified. Ironically, although *Paradise Lost* provides readers with an intimate appreciation for Satan's heroic background story, by revealing that Satan chooses to bring about the Fall precisely because Adam and Eve are innocent and because the loss of their innocence would allow Satan an emotional victory against God (his ultimate object of revenge), Milton ultimately creates a more sinisterly evil villain than is conceived or described in *In Quintum Novembris*.

Milton's inclusion of Satan's thoughts in *In Quintum Novembris* (his anger at the English people and his indirect acknowledgement that he is on the side of evil) reveal that the young

Milton was interested in the mindset of a terrorist. Over time, Milton developed and refined his understanding of terrorism; this development is exposed in the author's intense psychological exploration of Satan in *Paradise Lost*.

Milton foreshadows Satan's complex character in his description of the villain in Book One:

The 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 heaven, with all his host  
Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring  
To set himself in glory above his peers,  
He trusted to have equaled the most high,  
If he opposed; and with ambitious aim  
Against the throne and monarchy of God  
Raised impious war in heaven and battle proud  
With vain attempt. (1.34-44)

Although Satan is an "infernal serpent" associated with guile, revenge, deceit, pride, impiety, and vanity, he is also an outcast, a David facing the Goliath God, who aspires for glory, aims ambitiously, and battles proudly. Through careful diction, Milton sets up a complex character, a heroic heathen, a victimized villain, a tormented tormentor who disdains what he desires.

When Satan considers his new surrounding, Hell, for the first time, he grows even angrier at God than he was when he first waged war in Heaven.

...but his doom  
Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought  
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain  
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes  
That witnessed huge affliction and dismay  
Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate (1.53-58)

In Hell Satan realizes the joy and happiness he knew in Heaven has been forever replaced with interminable agony. Satan is irate. He is specifically angry with God because it is that deity who is responsible for Satan's pain. In a limited purview, Satan's reaction is understandable. Who would not be distraught by losing paradise and happiness; who would not be angry that it had been replaced with eternal pain and torment? Regardless of how justified the punishment, we can understand Satan's response to damnation.

Our sympathy for Satan grows when the leader of the fallen angels addresses his lieutenant, painting a convincing portrait of victimization. God is a "potent victor" and "in his rage" (1:95) inflicts pain on those he conquers. Do Satan and his followers submit to God's will, repent their sins, and bemoan their losses? Never.

All is not lost; the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield:  
And what is else not to be overcome?  
That glory never shall his wrath or might  
Extort from me. (1.106-111)

Rather than sitting around Hell pitying themselves, Satan urges his followers to turn their loss and pain into hate. These wronged warriors resolve

To wage by force or guile eternal war  
Irreconcilable to our grand foe,  
Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy  
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of heaven. (1.121-124)

God is the triumphant tyrant who greedily lives in “excess of joy”. That particular phrase, “excess of joy”, implies that God has more happiness than he needs, more pleasure than He could hope to enjoy. Why, then, when He already has an excess of joy, is it necessary for God to forever deprive the fallen angels of *all* happiness? Such avaricious behavior seems more suited to a cruel dictator than a loving god, or so Satan likes to think.

Satan’s intense hatred of God insatiable thirst for revenge makes sense if we understand Satan to be a victim. However, if Satan actually was a victim, he would not show remorse for his actions and he would not acknowledge a debt to his victimizer. Milton complicates this image of Satan as victim when he describes his antagonist looking around and casting “Signs of remorse and passion to behold / The fellows of his crime” (1.606-6). Does Satan look remorsefully around because he feels guilty for causing the eternal damnation of his followers? Or does he look around with remorse because he wants his comrades to *believe* that he feels remorse? Does this remorse reflect a genuine feeling of regret or does it indicate a pathological self-interest? There is no clear answer. Milton’s objective, however, is not to provide a clear answer but to draw readers in to Satan’s character.



Satan's attitude towards his own actions, the justification of his punishment, and towards God himself are further complicated in Book Four. The villain enters earth where the sunlight reminds him "from what state / I fell, how glorious once above they sphere" (4.38-9). While he reminisces about the glories of Heaven, Satan admits that it was his own pride and ambition that caused his fate ("Till pride and worse ambition threw me down / Warring in heaven against heaven's matchless king", 4.40-1). Satan proceeds to describe God's actions as justified and merited:

...He deserved no such return  
From me, whom he created what I was  
In that bright eminence, and with his good  
Unbraided none; nor was his service hard.  
What could be less than to afford him praise,  
The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks,  
How due! (4.42-48)

After flirting with the idea of rehabilitation, Satan arrives at the realization that he must be forever damned:

For never can true reconciliation grow  
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep:  
Which would but lead me to a worse relapse  
And heavier fall: so should I purchase dear  
Short intermission bought with double smart.  
This knows my punisher; therefore as far

From granting he, as I from begging peace:  
All hope excluded thus, behold instead  
Of us outcast, exiled, his new delight  
Mankind created, and for him this world.  
So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,  
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;  
Evil be thou my good (4.98-110)

It is in this passage that the possibility for Satan's redemption, our hope for his happiness, is crushed. Satan considers the possibility of goodness, realizes it would be impossible for him (on a permanent basis, at least), and resigns himself to evil. In this passage the reader is again tempted to sympathize for Satan. He wants to be good, but he cannot every achieve goodness because of his ambition. But who gave Satan ambition? Ultimately, because the omnipotent God created Satan, is not God responsible for Satan's fall? Milton's sympathetic portrayal of Satan induces his readers to consider Satan's perspective, which, in certain moments, leads us to entertain some rather radical ideas about the world's ultimate villain. By portraying such a complex character, Milton causes his readers to do exactly what he wants: he forces his readers, consciously or otherwise, to try to get inside Satan's head.

Inside the arch-villain's mind, readers find a passionate sense of injustice, a burning desire to avenge that injustice, and an utter disregard for any innocence that is lost in his quest for revenge. This mentality is reminiscent of what one might expect to be the mindset of Guy Fawkes or Robert Catesby. The Gunpowder plotters resented English discrimination against Catholics and conspired to bring down the English government in the name of justice. Perhaps Fawkes or Catesby were troubled that their plan necessitated the loss of so many lives, but,

regardless, they decided that the cost of human lives was well worth the reward of greater religious freedom. By detailing Satan's motivations as well as his actions, Milton reveals not only the mindset of a villain, but also, more specifically, the mindset of a terrorist.

Examining the similarities between the character of Satan in *In Quintum Novembris* and *Paradise Lost* reveals that Milton drew upon his own conceptualization of Satan as a terrorist in *In Quintum Novembris* to create the arch-villain in *Paradise Lost*. His in-depth exploration of Satan's psychology present in his epic poem reveals Milton's attempt to understand the mindset of a terrorist and exposes his growing concern over the story and perspective of the terrorist himself. Comparing the two poems also demonstrates Milton's anxiety surrounding slippery relationship between good and evil. In *In Quintum Novembris*, Milton clearly establishes that Satan is evil and the objects of his revenge are on the side of good; *Paradise Lost* introduces the disconcerting idea that the terrorist believes that *he* is on the side of "right" and ultimately creates a disturbing ambiguity between good and evil. When two forces oppose each other, each believes that he is "right", which is to say that he believes his cause is righteous and his actions are justified. Only one side (God's) can truly be righteous, but our ability to trust our own judgment and to discern which side is right was lost when Satan seduced Eve and convinced her to commit the original sin.

There is a noticeable lack of overt violence in *Paradise Lost*. Indeed, Satan's ultimate evil act is not using gunpowder in the War in Heaven, but rather using psychology to get inside Eve's head and convert her to his co-conspirator. Young Milton in *In Quintum Novembris* sees terrorism in terms of black and white: Satan is evil (there is no justification for this evil) and he uses violence, murder, and treason to carry out his acts of terrorism against innocent victims. A mature Milton in *Paradise Lost* recognizes terrorism in varying shades of gray. Perhaps the

terrorism does not necessitate violence. Perhaps the terrorist has, in a limited purview, victim-like qualities. In *In Quintum Novmebris*, Milton creates an absolute villain whom readers hate absolutely. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton conjures a villain so intriguing that he forces his readers to reevaluate their perspectives of Satan, to, perhaps, question their faith, and to challenge their conception of terrorism.

### Chapter Three: Eve *Political Implications of the Fall*

Eve ate fruit from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge and this act has come to be known as the original sin and the cause of the fall of humankind. Although Eve is not forcibly coerced to eat the forbidden fruit, the idea was persuasively planted in her head by Satan. This chapter will explore the seduction of Eve as it relates to the concept of Satan as terrorist. After a close reading of the critical passages from *Paradise Lost*, I will build off of discussions in the previous two chapters in order to analyze Satan's tools and motivations for carrying out his plan to bring about the Fall and to discuss the implications of this original sin. Eve's seduction does not precisely fit into any standard tradition of terrorism nor and it certainly does not neatly map onto the Gunpowder Plot. When Satan's persuades Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, he does not use a weapon of mass destruction; however, there are parallels with respect to how Milton depicts Satan's resourcefulness and motivations. In this light, we can think of the Eve's seduction as an inventive act, not necessarily of a new weapon (as was the case with gunpowder), but of a new type of weapon altogether: psychological terrorism. The result of Satan's ultimate act of terror (or at the very least, ultimate terrorist-like act) renders humans incapable of trusting their own judgment and unable to discern, without God's help, good from evil; human law is consequently subject to questions of legitimacy, which ultimately causes an ambiguity between terrorism and revolution, between a terrorist and a martyr.

In Book Four, Milton describes Satan's first interaction with Eve:

...him there they found

Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve;

Assaying by his devilish art to reach  
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge  
Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams,  
Or if, inspiring venom he might taint  
The animal spirits that from pure blood arise  
Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise  
At least distempered, discontented thoughts,  
Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires  
Blown up with high conceits engendering pride. (4.799-809)

Satan is not physically harming Eve; indeed, Eve has no conscious memory of interacting with him. We see here another example of Satan's secretive and guileful operations. Satan is whispering, an act which in and of itself most often indicates secrecy, into Eve's ear in hopes of planting thoughts that appeal to her vanity.

Not only is this particular scene connected to the earlier episode of the War in Heaven through the secretive nature of Satan's operation, but a few lines after the Satan whispers in Eve's ear, Milton makes another reference to gunpowder. When angels discover Satan squat as a toad at Eve's ear, Satan starts

...As when a spark  
Lights on a heap of nitrous powder, laid  
Fit for the tun some magazine to store  
Against a rumoured war (4.814-817)

This is the only moment in all of *Paradise Lost* that Milton mentions gunpowder by that name. In the War in Heaven, gunpowder was Satan's creation, a tool he hoped to use to overwhelm God and his angels. In the passage quoted above, gunpowder does not have a function in action of the plot and instead works only as a simile to describe how Satan starts when he is surprised by the angels. Milton had a plethora of options for this particular simile and his choice to use gunpowder is deliberate. By referencing gunpowder and having Satan act in secrecy, Milton clearly desires to associate at least some element of the War in Heaven as well as the Gunpowder Plot to Satan's interaction with Eve.

In this particular episode, Satan does not succeed in ruining God's new creation. He does, however, set himself up for future success in tempting Eve in Book Nine. In this scene, we again see Satan operate in a secretive and guileful fashion ("Eve separate he spies, / Veiled in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood, / Half spied" 9.424-6). Additionally, Milton emphasizes Satan's ferocity by directly contrasting his "malice" (461), "fierceness" (462), "guile", "hate", "envy", "revenge" (466), and "torture" (469) with Eve's "graceful innocence" (459) and "pleasure" (470). Although Satan is briefly distracted by the goodness and beauty of Eve and Eden, he soon remembers his "fierce hate" (471), which excites "his thoughts/ of mischief" (471-2). Indeed, Satan's reflection upon his temporary consideration of Eve's goodness ultimately reveals his terroristic impulse:

Thoughts, whither have ye led me, with what sweet  
Compulsion thus transported to forget  
What hither brought us, hate, not love, nor hope  
Of Paradise for hell, hope here to taste  
Of pleasure, but all pleasure to destroy,

Save what is in destroying, other joy  
To me is lost. Then let me not let pass  
Occasion which now smiles, behold alone  
The woman, opportune to all attempts (9.473-481)

Satan clarifies that he has come to Earth neither because he hopes to improve his situation in Hell nor because he wants to indulge in the pleasures of Paradise, but because he takes pleasure in destruction. Destroying God's creation is the only pleasure Satan can enjoy and it is to this end that Satan acts.

In order to convince Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit, Satan chiefly appeals to Eve's vanity. He calls Eve a goddess and raves about her "celestial beauty" (9.540) and then appeals to her power by telling her that he worships her, the "Sovereign of creatures, universal dame" (612), the "Queen of this universe" (684). Satan tells Eve that God only forbids the fruit from that tree "to keep ye low and ignorant" (704). Satan does not use force or violence to make Eve commit the original sin but rather, he uses Eve's pride to convince her that she should partake from the Tree of Knowledge.

The "Gunpowder" chapter discusses Satan's practice of taking God's creation and perverting them so that he can use them for his own gain. Satan utilizes the same type of operation when he seduces Eve. In the War in Heaven, Satan uses the resources he has available to him, the raw materials of Heaven, and alters them so that they can function as weapons against God. In bringing about the Fall, Satan exploits what God has created, specifically Eve's beauty and vanity, and uses that vanity to convince her that she desires to and is justified in eating fruit from the forbidden tree.



Appelbaum rightly points out that no weapons are used at all in the “terrorist-like plot against Adam and Eve and the Lord’s ‘new world’” (486). The earth itself does experience violence as a *result* of Eve and Adam’s sin (9.1000-1004), but neither the sin itself nor the act of coercing to sin is violent. Appelbaum fails to make much of this point. However, pushing this idea of terrorism without violence a bit further reveals that Milton’s interest in *psychological* terror. When I say that Milton expressed an interest in psychological terror, a concept not formally recognized until the nineteenth century (McCoy), I do not mean to imply that Milton “invented” the idea of psychological terror. Indeed, the term “terrorism” did not even exist until after Milton’s death (Appelbaum 465), so the author would not have considered any act, psychological or otherwise, as “terroristic” per se. However, Milton’s association of psychology with other elements of terrorism suggests that the author *considered* the potential to use psychological rather than violent methods to achieve ones ends, the very same potential that has been recognized today by those who utilize psychological torture.

The Temptation and Fall of humans in *Paradise Lost* is not an allegory of the Gunpowder Plot. However, there are a striking number of associations between the two Temptation of Eve and the War in Heaven, which could certainly be considered a terroristic act. In both cases, Satan has a clear and political agenda: to win (or at the very least, to win revenge) against God. In both episodes, Satan operates under the cloak of guile and secrecy. Also in both cases, Satan exercises his creative power in inventing weapons to carry out his agenda and specifically uses God’s own creation against their maker. These two methods by which Satan characteristically operates when carrying out his terroristic plots, in addition to the reference to gunpowder in the scene where Satan is whispering in a sleeping Eve’s ear, all establish a strong association between the Temptation/Fall and terrorism. Appelbaum is the first to point out, however, that

the Temptation, unlike the War in Heaven and the Gunpowder Plot, does not use (or plan to use) a weapon of mass destruction or any overt violence. For Appelbaum, the lack of violence makes the Temptation of Eve and Fall of Man merely a “terrorist-like” plot rather than an actual act of terrorism. Are violence and weapons of mass destructions necessary for an act to be considered terroristic? Did Milton think so? Many modern audiences recognize that certain forms of terrorism do not necessitate physical violence to be considered “terroristic”. The most pertinent example of this is psychological terrorism, which relies not on physical violence to achieve its ends but rather the manipulation and even torture of a person’s psyche (McCoy).

Milton picked up on some salient features of what we today call terrorism, namely secrecy, guile, political goals, and the invention and utilization of weapons of mass destruction. Even if Milton did not believe that the seduction of Eve should be considered in the same category of evil as the Gunpowder Plot and the War in Heaven, the author did at least recognize the potential of psychological manipulation and indeed, the author’s painstakingly detailed exploration of Satan’s own mindset and motivations indicates Milton’s own emphasis on and interest in the power of psychology.

Regardless of if the Temptation is considered to be an act of terrorism or merely a terrorist-like act, the Fall has significant political implications. Eve herself articulates the ramifications of the Fall when she is talking to Satan before she succumbs to temptation:

But of this tree we may not taste or touch;  
God so commanded, and left that command  
Sole daughter of his voice; the rest, we live  
Law to our selves, our reason is our law. (9.651-654)

Before eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve are allowed to govern every aspect of their lives (except, of course, eating from the Tree of Knowledge) and they can be rightly justified and led to act by their reason. Although Satan fails to damage the legitimacy of divine authority, Eve's submission to Satan's persuasion ultimately results in humans losing their right and ability to self-govern.

As a result of original sin, humans lost their ability to trust their own judgment (But this pre-eminence thou has lost", 11.347). Those that have God in their hearts will be guided by the divine, but God "attributes to play / No sanctity, if none be thither brought / By men who there frequent, or therein dwell" (11.836-8). Without God to help them judge good from evil, men may create sinful laws. However, laws are given "to evince / Their natural pravity, by stirring up / Sin against law to fight; that when they see / Law can discover sin" (12.287-290). Without God in their hearts, men cannot discern what is sinful. Laws are needed because humans are sinful, but at the same time, because laws are created by men, sinful men can create sinful laws.

The only legitimate authority is that of the divine. God gave man dominion over beasts, "but man over men / He made not lord; such title to himself / Reserving, human left from human free" (12.69-71). Milton experienced that in political conflict, each side claimed that *it* was the true side with divine authority. Because only God has legitimate authority and because Satan's actions caused human fallibility, no human authority can claim to be legitimate, at least not for perpetuity.

There is a marked transition from *In Quintum Novembris* and *Paradise Lost* with respect to claims of legitimacy and "right" and "wrong". In Milton's earlier poem, Satan clearly recognizes that he is on the side of evil and the English people are on the side of good. Indeed, it

is this very disparity that motivates the Satan in *In Quintum Novembris* to plot against the English. However, in *Paradise Lost*, Satan questions God's goodness and ultimately renders humanity unable to govern itself. Satan thus creates ambiguity in human authority and in doing so, he sparks wars and terrorism between political powers which both claim that theirs is the legitimate authority.

Milton's shift from certainty in human authority to ambiguity on that authority was obviously influenced by his personal political experiences, specifically the English Civil War. At the age of seventeen, Milton was so strongly affected by the Catholic plotter's attempt to kill the English king that he wrote a poem in which God favors the English people and thwarts Satan's attempt to murder King James I. However, during the English Civil War (a war considered by Milton to be not only just, but righteous), Milton actively and publicly defended regicide, specifically of King James I's son, Charles I (Loxley 261). Milton believed that no human authority could claim "divine right" to rule, at least not forever. Milton's ideal system for governance was most closely realized in the rule of Oliver Cromwell, but that brief period of political satisfaction was disappointed by the brief reign of Cromwell's son and, even more bitterly, the restoration of the monarchy that soon followed (Dzelzainis 82).

Satan's temptation of Eve shares elements of secrecy, conspiracy, political motivation, and perversion of creation (to bring about destruction) with the War in Heaven in *Paradise Lost* as well as the Gunpowder Plot as Milton understood it in *In Quintum Novembris*. At the very least, this parallelism shows that Milton believed there was a fundamental connection between Fawkes' role in the Gunpowder Plot, Satan's role in the War in Heaven, and finally the villain's role in the Fall. Milton's political experience surrounding the English Civil War led him to understand a fundamental problem with any human claim to permanent legitimate authority.

Milton expresses this ambiguity through Satan's seduction of Eve which forces humans to give up their right to govern themselves, thereby calling into question the legitimacy of all human laws and institutions of government.

## Conclusion

Milton's references to gunpowder and conspiracy in *Paradise Lost* signify that the poet was still thinking about the Gunpowder Plot when he wrote his great epic. Indeed, Milton drew upon the Gunpowder literary tradition (to which he as a young man contributed) when he created the character of Satan. Milton connects the War in Heaven to the terroristic Gunpowder Plot and by association, he identifies Satan as a terrorist. The character of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is much more developed than his counterpart in *In Quintum Novembris* and by analyzing these developments, we can understand how Milton's understanding of terrorism changed over the course of his life. One of the most important aspects of Milton's characterization of Satan in *Paradise Lost* is his attention to Satan's *mindset*. By analyzing Satan's motivations, we can understand the mindset of a terrorist; by recognizing Satan's psychological manipulation of Eve, we understand that for Milton, the real drama occurs in the inward space of the mind and imagination.

Perhaps the most important question, however, is *why* Milton chose to draw parallels between terrorism and the Fall. The result of the Fall was that humans lost their ability to trust their own judgment and to govern themselves. God has ultimate authority and no person can claim perpetual legitimate authority over human race. Without God's help, we cannot tell good from evil. The result of Satan's act was the creation of ambiguity over right and wrong and over legitimate and illegitimate claims to authority. Milton knew all too well the consequences of this ambiguity. In both the Gunpowder Plot and the English Civil War, each side claimed that it was the victim of an illegitimate authority, that it had God on its side, and that it was justified in its violent actions against its enemy.

Milton associated Satan's actions with terrorism because he recognized that they were fundamentally connected. In Milton's mind, Satan fathered terrorism. Satan was the father of terrorism not only in the sense that his mindset and methods parallel those of a terrorist, but more importantly in the sense that his ultimate act of evil set up a world in which terrorism could exist, a world in which the ambiguity surrounding the legitimacy of human laws and authority resulted in acts of terror.

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