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MILTON AND EMPIRE: SATANIC AND EDENIC COLONIZATION IN *PARADISE*

LOST

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BY

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ABSTRACT

MILTON AND EMPIRE: SATANIC AND EDENIC COLONIZATION IN *PARADISE*

LOST

BY: SEBASTIAN N. PERAIC

Within *Paradise Lost* are numerous themes of early European colonialism: Satan as an imperialist aggressor, Adam and Eve as peaceful settlers, and Eden as a literal New World. Dissecting these themes tends to beg the question whether John Milton supported his country's colonialism or not. The duplicity in the poem's colonial parallels suggests that what support Milton may have had was conditional; in the poem, Milton condones Adam and Eve's colonialism, but not Satan's. Satan's colonialism may very closely resemble that of the Black Legend Spanish, but this paper will approach it differently. This thesis will suggest two colonial readings of *Paradise Lost*: the first, that Satan's conquest of Eden resembles Oliver Cromwell's conquest of Jamaica; the second, that Adam and Eve's settling in Eden resembles the Puritan settling of New England. These two readings create two distinct models of colonialism as Milton

understood them: an imperial model, and a settler model, respectively. Through historical examples and evidence from the poem, this paper will argue Milton's support of the latter model in favor of the former, as well as examine his stakes in writing colonial literature.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPB: Commonplace Book

"Holy War": "An Advertisement Touching an Holy War"

"Inducements to the Voyage": "Inducements to the Liking of the Voyage Intended towards Virginia in 40. and 42. Degrees"

PL: Paradise Lost

"Reasons for the Plantation": "Reasons to Be Considered for Justifying the Undertakers of the Intended Plantation in New England and for Encouraging Such Whose Hearts God Shall Move to Join with Them in It."

"Use of the Law": "The Use of the Law; For Preservation of our Persons, Goods, and Good Names, According to the Practice of the Laws and Customs of this Land"

Introduction

It may be difficult to imagine *Paradise Lost* as a piece of colonial literature. John Milton's opinions on imperialism are difficult to discern as he rarely, if ever, put his feelings about the subject to paper. This has hardly deterred scholars, especially in the mid-to-late 90s, from reading his epic poem as a discussion of the European colonization of the New World. The analogues are certainly apparent if one takes a closer look: Satan as a conqueror, God as an emperor, Eden as a literal new world with Adam and Eve as its native inhabitants. However, the allegory instantly becomes muddy; how can God be a colonizer like Satan when Eden, God's colony, comes about by his creation? How can Satan be a colonizer when his domain in Hell is effectively a prison sentence—a punishment taking the form of banishment to a hostile, foreign space? How can Adam and Eve be citizens of God's colony if they are also natives whom Satan targets and destroys?

A postcolonial reading of this poem is messy, although many postcolonial critics have not let this discourage their readings. J. Martin Evans, one such critic, in his 1996 *Milton's Imperial Epic* lays out all the historical allegories he discerns and develops them reasonably well; however, in doing so he crafts a questionable conclusion: "Imperial expansion, the poem

implies, is morally neutral. When it is practiced by the virtuous, it is entirely admirable. When it is practiced by the wicked, it is one of the greatest evils that the human race can endure."¹ Evans' last sentence refers to the competitive nature of early European colonialism; the settlement of the New World was a race between England, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal to see who could hope to compete with Spain. In the process of dominating most of Latin America, word of Spain's numerous atrocities committed there spread throughout England and the rest of Europe. These horrific tales comprised the Black Legend of Spain, which portrayed the Spanish as the "wicked" colonizers to whom Evans refers.

My reading tends to treat the poem with more nuance than Evans' reading does. In *Paradise Lost*, a dichotomy appears in its models of overseas expansionism: one model practiced by Satan, whose actions resemble the heroic exploration, thirst for

¹ Evans, *Milton's Imperial Epic*, pg. 147. Note that although I seek to criticize argument, while hopefully expanding upon it, I have found his readings of the poem and the evidence he compiles to be instrumental in informing my own readings and crafting my own arguments. However, I do find his conclusion in need of further depth and nuance, especially due to his impact on this particular thread of study.

resources and native abuse associated with Spanish imperialism; and one model practiced by Adam and Eve, whose humble, self-contained, peaceful farming settlement resembles Puritan New England. While Satan's imperial expansion appears to be an object of critique in the poem, Eden is presented as a shining example of ethical settling in foreign territory. In laying this out, I will suggest that Satan's parallel with the Black Legend Spanish forms yet another parallel with England's imperial ventures, serving as Milton's critique of his country's unjust practices. Through Adam and Eve's parallel with the Puritan English, I will suggest that Milton sought to provide an ideal, classical prototype for English colonies to follow.

Moreover, Evans' conclusion makes a few critical assumptions worth challenging. First, his claim that Milton viewed imperial expansion through a morally neutral lens implies that Milton saw the difference in "wicked" or "virtuous" expansionism to be a national difference. Evans states that Milton would have seen Spain's expansionism as unequivocally immoral and wrong because they were Spaniards, not because they were colonizers. What Evans calls "the identity of the colonizer" matters more than their method of occupation.

Yet, even though Milton may have found the Spanish contemptible, like any anti-Spanish, anti-Catholic Englishman of

his time, I do not believe his contempt for Spain's imperial practices comes purely from his national loyalties. Milton was aware of the Black Legend, if only because his nephew John Phillip translated Las Casas' *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, retitled *The Tears of the Indians*. In his original introduction to the translation, Phillips refers to the "Satanical Scope" of Spanish imperialism: "For doubtless it hath been the Satanical Scope of this Tyrant, To set all the European Princes at Variance, and to keep them busie at home, that they might not have leasure to bend their Forces against his Golden Regions."² Published so near to the writing of *Paradise Lost*, this text's significance in reimagining Spain as a Satanic empire cannot be denied. Should the events of *Paradise Lost* be taken as part of a continuous history culminating towards Milton's present day, Satan effectively becomes history's first imperialist, acting as a prototype for Spanish colonialism. Satan colonizes in the same destructive, tyrannical nature which Milton associated with Spain through his knowledge of Las Casas. Regarding the nature of Spanish colonialism, Philips avers:

The intention of these men was Murder; and they kill'd up
the poor Indians, not as if they had been their Fellow-

² John Phillips, *The Tears of the Indians* (1656)

Mortals, but like Death it self; and invaded their Land,
not like Men, but like the Pestilence, whose destruction is
Epidemical.

This text never neglects to criticize the evils of Spain as a nation, but before appealing to any national animosity, Phillips makes sure enumerate Spain's individual moral transgressions. Milton's opposition to Spain's expansionism followed the same logic; before he directed contempt towards Spain itself, he directed it towards Spanish Imperialism. Evans' idea that the identity of the parties involved took priority over the practices at hand, then, is reductive.

Where Spain stands in Evans' argument as the "wicked" colonizing power, England's position is a little more ambiguous. Evans' discussion of the North American colonies once again centers national loyalties; according to him, Virginia's loyalties to Charles I and the royalists would have earned Milton's disapproval, while New England's Puritans, who rejected the crown's authority along with its church, would have earned his favor. I do not necessarily disagree with this conclusion, but once again I find it omits important functional differences between these colonies, such as their respective settling processes, attachments to their mother country, and treatment of native populations. Most notably, Evans ignores one particular

imperial enterprise with which Milton would have been much more familiar: Cromwell's Western Design.

The Western Design was the Lord Protector Cromwell's dramatic and ambitious attempt to conquer the entirety of Spanish America, which utilized a sizable military fleet to set sail for Barbados in 1654. With this navy, Cromwell aimed to seize Spanish holdings in the New World, liberating them from their Catholic rulers and appropriating for England their permanent settlements and silver mines—the very same ones Las Casas described as forced labor camps for enslaved natives. Striking against England's adversaries and absorbing their new territory and wealth would have appealed to the revolutionary government, while also proving their military might and providing them unprecedented financial power. However, the navy's invasion of Hispaniola ended in failure, leaving the remaining forces to set their sights on Jamaica. In the campaign for Jamaica, Cromwell's forces found themselves fighting former African slaves who had escaped the Spanish years before, whom they assumed would side with the English and view them as liberators. In the end, Jamaica was the Design's only successful conquest, which not only took Spain until 1670 to formally recognize, but resulted in more than a century of guerilla warfare between the English and the freed slaves. The project

began with high expectations, and Cromwell was optimistic—the reality of its failures was a staggering disappointment.³

Milton may have shared in this disappointment. Given his position in Cromwell's government, Milton would have been well aware of plans to mobilize a navy towards Spanish America. Although England had permanent settlements already, both in the American Northeast and scattered around Latin America, the Design would be the first full-scale English invasion of the New World. Perhaps in Milton's eyes, England seemed to be approaching a haunting parallel with Spain's relentless exploitation of the New World. On account of the Design's goals and failures, Milton would have been troubled by England's emerging imperial endeavors, which seemed all too similar to Spain's.

Let us take a moment to return to the text at hand. Of the expansionist powers in *Paradise Lost*, Satan's vengeful desires for pillage, plunder, and appropriation of Eden most closely resemble the actions of Spain's conquistadors and Cromwell's navy. This more imperial form of colonialism thrives on the

³ For more, see Carla Pestana's *The English Conquest of Jamaica*, Robert Emmett Curran's chapter on the West Indies in his *Intestine Enemies*, and Robert Thomas Fallon's "Cromwell, Milton, and the Western Design"

acquisition of material wealth, no matter the cost to human life in the process. Satan's promise to Sin and Death upon returning from Earth further indicates these parallels:

...thence on the Earth
 Dominion exercise and in the Air,
 Chiefly on Man, sole Lord of all declar'd,
 Him first make sure your thrall, and lastly kill.⁴

Recall Spain's intentions in the New World according to Las Casas: to bring destruction and death to the Native Americans. Here, Satan urges the seduction and enslavement of mankind before their ultimate demise. Not only does Phillips put Spain's colonialism in Satanic terms, so too does Milton in making Satan's mission an imperial venture.

If Satan represents an evil, depraved form of expansionism practiced by both England and Spain, then where does the poem's "good" colonialism come from? If the Black Legend arose from horror at Spain's violence, then a "good" counterpart must have lacked such violence. In the text, this "good colonialism" is clearly that practiced by Adam and Eve; in Milton's time, this was ascribed to Puritan settlements on the North Atlantic Coast, which formed with no military might and little financial support to back them. Instead, their settlement of New England was

⁴ PL 10.399-402

framed by bold, inexperienced religious refugees seeking a safer and freer life, beyond mere material wealth or expansion of territory. Although these settlers may have considered their material gain if only in regards to their survival, the New England Puritans sought little more than to practice their faith freely, create farms and simply live off land they thought vacant. This "good" colonialism—which Adam and Eve mimic in the poem through peacefully planting in Eden and basking in its abundance—foils that which Milton criticizes through Satan. Satan is willing to lay waste to Eden in his attempt to claim it, while Adam and Eve live in harmony with their dwelling, simultaneously reaping and maintaining its bounty.

Furthermore, Adam and Eve's colonialism is free from yet another economic enterprise which dominated the early colonial period: slavery. Slavery has no analogue in *Paradise Lost*, but the language which Hell's denizens—Beelzebub, for instance—use to refer to themselves is illuminating:

And know not that the King of Heav'n hath doom'd
 This place our dungeon, not our safe retreat
 Beyond his Potent arm, to live exempt
 From Heav'n's high jurisdiction, in new League
 Banded against his Throne, but to remain
 In strictest bondage, though thus far remov'd,

Under th' inevitable curb, reserv'd
 His captive multitude: For he, be sure,
 In highth or depth, still first and last will Reign
 Sole King, and of his Kingdom lose no part
 By our revolt, but over Hell extend
 His Empire, and with Iron Sceptre rule
 Us here, as with his Golden those in Heav'n.⁵

Beelzebub's language describes a forced removal from their homeland to live in a foreign, hostile space, while still "captive" to the "jurisdiction" which "doom'd" them to this fate. This passage laments the injustice inflicted upon them, in transporting them to this space against their will—a rare instance in which the devils appear wholly sympathetic.

This can certainly be interpreted as alluding to the displacement of West Africans from their homelands through the slave trade, another travesty with which Spain had been long involved, along with England to a lesser extent. Barbados, for instance, trafficked African slave labor long before Jamaica

⁵ *PL* 2.315-328

became England's preferred slave port.⁶ However, Beelzebub's lament may also refer to England's preferred method of providing manual labor to its mid-Atlantic colonies in North America: the mass transport of convicts as indentured servants. Alan D.

Watson informs us:

Numerically far more important than slaves before 1700, and remaining a conspicuous component of the bound emigrants to English America until the American Revolution, indentured servants constituted well more than half and perhaps as many as two-thirds of the whites who traveled to the colonies before independence.⁷

Convict transportation had been in full swing since the reign of James I, and although the practice dwindled during Cromwell's time, it was hardly out of the ordinary. For Milton, this means where Spain relied on forced labor, England did too—from both

⁶ Milton's *Commonplace Book* reveals his feelings on slavery, where he claims "Refuge from hard-hearted masters was given to slaves by civil law" (CPB p. 113). It seems Milton was not fundamentally against slavery in general, only in its cruelest form. His exposure to New World slavery through *Las Casas* may have earned his disapproval.

⁷ Alan D. Watson, "A Consideration of European Indentured Servitude in Colonial North Carolina." pg. 381

foreign and domestic populations. The Puritan settlements on the East Coast, however, did no such thing. Like Adam and Eve, the Puritans produced colonies that had no need to "make...thrall" or "lastly kill" the native inhabitants.

Therefore, Milton's portrayal of Eden praised New England, and his portrayal of Satan criticized Spain and Cromwell. Yet, even though I will argue *Paradise Lost* should be viewed as a piece of colonial literature, I would not claim that Milton necessarily intended it to be read this way. His depiction of Satanic and Edenic colonization may simply have been an inflection of the geo-political landscape of his era. However, had he intended such a reading, then the split model of colonialism that appears in *Paradise Lost* comes from a desire to see colonialism carried out in a responsible, ethical fashion. Perhaps in creating this dichotomy, Milton does what Maja-Lisa von Sneidern claims he accomplishes: "Through example, *Paradise Lost* offers historicity to the colonial enterprise, sanctions the project, and instructs and cautions those who must implement

it on how best to proceed."⁸ If this statement reflects how Milton saw colonialism as a whole, then Eden is Milton's example of an ideal colony: the prototype for an innocent "colonial enterprise."

The first section of this paper will discuss the Satanic paradigm, which I will refer to as the "imperial" model of colonialism. This model is characterized by state interests, military endeavors, the harvesting and abuse of natural resources, and the disregard, oppression, or active destruction of native populations. In traveling to Earth, Satan seeks to do all of these, thus prefiguring the Early Modern imperialist.

The second section will focus on the Edenic paradigm, a kinder, gentler form of colonialism which I will call the "settler" model. This model is founded on classical notions of colonies and colonists, emphasizing humble farming settlements, self-sufficiency, free labor and peace. Adam and Eve live this simple, homestead-ish lifestyle before Satan finds and ruins them.

⁸ Maja-Lisa von Sneidern, *Savage Indignation*, pg. 33. Von Sneidern mostly argues Milton's position to be pro-colonial, giving little attention to the dichotomy or nuance I wish to present. Despite this, her claim here best represents what *Paradise Lost* accomplishes as a piece of colonial literature.

The Imperial Model

To begin connecting this imperial colonialism to *Paradise Lost*, we must first define the proper analogue in the text; this tends to be Satan. To carry out his design against God, Satan travels vast, unknown distances to stake claims on newly discovered space. In this regard, he functions much like the Early Modern colonial adventurer as Evans describes: "Those who journeyed to the New World were consistently portrayed in early colonial literature as being more ambitious, more energetic, and more daring than those who stayed behind in the Old."⁹ His bombastic speeches, long and harrowing voyages, and grand, dramatic gestures of rebellion also fit this role. However, Satan's adventurous nature quickly turns malicious and exploitative; characterizing him more like a Black Legend conquistador rather than a romanticized adventurer.

At this point, it is necessary to lay out what Milton accomplishes in projecting this conquistador stereotype onto the Prince of Lies. While Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, much of the English consciousness regarding the New World drew from the Black Legend of Spain. English versions of the Black Legend, while informed by eyewitness accounts such as those by Las

⁹ Evans pg. 61

Casas, were exaggerated for the sake of fostering anti-Spanish, anti-Catholic sentiments—sentiments that would later justify England's imperial endeavors. Many of England's early colonial theorists list, among their reasons for acquiring territory in the New World, a desire to liberate it from Spanish rule. Captain John Smith, who wrote about his own disgust at Spanish greed and brutality, viewed them rather competitively, even admitting admiration for Spain's and Portugal's first steps in exploration for England to follow.¹⁰ Thomas Gage, before his advisory role on the Western Design, was an ex-Dominican friar who wrote in favor of "a Protestant crusade to liberate Central and South America from the 'Romish' Spaniards."¹¹ Of these sources, recall that Milton was most familiar with Las Casas through Phillips, giving him not only a basis on which to critique Spanish imperial colonialism, but a source for his portrayal of Satan. Therefore, Milton's Satan exemplifies the

¹⁰ See Captain Smith's *A Description of New England*

¹¹ Robert Emmett Curran, *Intestine Enemies* pg. 101

imperial model of colonialism, which primarily forms in response to Spain.¹²

Satan's role in *Paradise Lost* as an imperial colonist is central to most postcolonial readings of the poem. Christopher Hodgkins rests much of his argument on comparisons between Satan and the historical conquistadors like Cortes, da Gama, and Columbus: "Milton's Satan succeeds against seemingly great odds by manipulating and mastering the native religious imagination

¹² I tend to say "imperial colonialism" when I could just as easily say "imperialism," and I want to specify why. Our modern understandings of imperialism do not quite apply to 17th century overseas expansion, both in theory and in practice. I base this off of Edward Said's distinction between imperialism and colonialism in his *Culture and Imperialism*: imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory," and colonialism as merely "the implanting of settlements on distant territory" which, however, he considers "almost always a consequence of imperialism" (See his *Culture and Imperialism* pg. 9). Although the imperial model follows this paradigm, I will argue that settler colonialism is one such instance where colonialism comes about in a non-imperialist nature.

through the crucial agency of a woman."¹³ Satan's insinuation of "himself into religious premonitions and imaginings at the cultic center of native life" and returning with loot in the form of a subdued Eden closely resembles Cortes' tactics against the Aztecs and his loot in the form of their gold.¹⁴ Other scholars make similar comparisons; Evans, for example, calls Satan a "demonic Sir Francis Drake."¹⁵ According to Maja Lisa von Sneidern: "Milton envisioned a proud, arrogant younger son of a Spanish grandee induced by a decadent system of inheritance to treacherously extract wealth from innocents to finance a despicable lifestyle."¹⁶

While an analogue with Spain is tempting to accept, Satan contains multitudes. By paralleling Satan with a multitude of explorers and colonists, both Hodgkins and Evans imply that Satan cannot be confined to representing a single ruthless, destructive adventurer. The warlike and ambitious Satan shakes hands with the conquistadors, but he also shakes hands with Drake and with Cromwell, indicating that Milton may have looked on in horror as Cromwell carried out his Western Design. Just as

¹³ Christopher Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire* pg. 65

¹⁴ Hodgkins pg. 70

¹⁵ Evans pg. 63

¹⁶ Von Sneidern pg. 39

the Spanish captured native settlements "because these Cities and other places were such pleasant abodes," Cromwell planned to capture Spain's outposts built on these "abodes": not unlike Satan capturing the already-settled Eden.¹⁷ In creating a conquistador-like Satan, Milton may have sought to warn his countrymen that England was soon to follow Spain's footsteps in their expansionist enterprises. As Walter Lim puts it, "we must respond to the portrayal of Satan by recognizing the ambiguity intrinsic to its wide range of allusions."¹⁸ Furthermore, no matter what persons, factions, and national interests Satan may represent, Milton uses him to condemn their common imperial colonialism.

Milton rarely wrote of his personal feelings regarding England's colonization efforts, or New World colonialism in general; therefore, discerning his position on the matter is

¹⁷ Bartolome de Las Casas, trans. by Phillips, *Tears of the Indians* pg. 29

¹⁸ Walter Lim, *Arts of Empire* pg. 213. Lim's discussion of *Paradise Lost* is short, but in my research I found it very constructive in understanding Milton's critiques of imperial colonialism.

difficult.¹⁹ Yet, an excerpt from his "Commonplace Book" provides some insight—one regarding his feelings about Cromwell's defeat at Hispaniola, the Design's first debacle: "Victory is based, not on strength or military experience, but on whether he who begins the war has God on his side."²⁰ Although it would be bold to say Milton would accept that Spain had God on its side, it is reasonable to assume that Cromwell's failure might lead Milton to question the moral righteousness of his endeavor. It is also worth considering Adam's shock and horror at Michael's prophecy of the violence and bloodshed mankind would inflict on each other in years to come:

Death's Ministers, not men, who thus deal death
 Inhumanly to men, and multiply
 Ten-thousandfold the sin of him who slew
 His brother; for of whom such massacre

¹⁹ Some say Milton unabashedly supported all of England's attempts, up to and including the Western Design; Bruce McLeod cites Milton's friendships with more adamant Cromwell supporters, his approval of Cromwell's treatment of Ireland, and his "militant Protestantism that had imperial expansion in its every sinew" as evidence of his unconditional support (See his "The 'Lordly Eye'" pg. 50).

²⁰ CPB P. 243

Make they but of their brethren, men of men?²¹

Milton may have seen the Design as a fundamentally unjust war waged for the sake of profit and power, and at the cost of innocent native lives. Readers of *Paradise Lost* can easily say the same for Satan's prospects. Satan, principally opposed to God in his mission, is both unjust and doomed to defeat, as we see with his punishment in Hell upon his return from Eden.

Prior to the Design, England had a presence in the Caribbean, which Milton likely disapproved of for a different reason. Almost three decades before they settled Jamaica, the English had minor colonies in the Caribbean, including Barbados, which saw the majority of England's first slave imports. Not only had Spain enslaved natives soon after their arrival, but they were the first to partake in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. For England to partake in this practice would seem like another step towards mimicking Spanish atrocity. Milton uses Adam yet again to condemn this, this time in his response to the events at the Tower of Babel:

O execrable Son so to aspire
 Above his Brethren, to himself assuming
 Authority usurpt, from God not giv'n:
 He gave us only over Beast, Fish, Fowl

²¹ *PL* 11.675-680

Dominion absolute; that right we hold
 By his donation; but Man over men
 He made not Lord; such title to himself
 Reserving, human left from human free.²²

Michael responds to Adam's horror with an explanation of tyranny, its evils, and its continued existence in human history. This exchange may be Milton's direct condemnation of slavery, if not imperial colonialism as a whole. These exchanges between Adam and Michael feel like direct injections of Milton's beliefs. This dialogue, taken together with what we know of Milton's personal attitudes, supports a historical analogue between Satan and an imperial colonist.

As we discuss this analogue, let us begin with the demonic council in Book 2 and its deliberation of military strategy. It is here that the devils first plan their strike against Earth; it is also here that, as Evans remarks, the devils first lay out "virtually all the social and political arguments that were advanced in favor of England's colonial expansion."²³ These arguments include the benefits of disrupting the vulnerable foreign outposts of their adversary, as well as territorial expansion. Their debate reflects the underlying motives that

²² *PL* 12.64-71

²³ Evans pg. 63

created the Design in the first place: a desire to disrupt Spain's hold on Latin America and secure their own presence there.

While Satan resembles Cromwell in his motives, he also employs a similar strategy. Satan's voyage requires that he avoid God's attention, or God might ruin his plan. Carla Pestana remarks on a similar process during preparations for the Design:

This impressively bold project proceeded with the utmost secrecy. Cromwell's control over the military infrastructure in England was well demonstrated by his ability to keep the purpose of the Design from public view even while extensive preparations spanned many months and occupied many people.²⁴

Just as Satan attempts to conceal his insurrection from God, Cromwell sought to escape the notice of the general public, and Spain by extension. Cromwell's attempt at secrecy came apart all too easily; not long before Cromwell's massive armada set sail for Barbados, the speculative English press, "joined by spies, foreign observers, and scattered residents of the British Isles," revealed the true purpose of the voyage—not only to the public, but to Spain and to the rest of Europe.²⁵ Compare this

²⁴ Pestana pg. 19

²⁵ Pestana pg. 33

with the results of Satan's attempt at secrecy, of which God immediately notices.

...he then survey'd

Hell and the Gulf between, and Satan there

Coasting the wall of Heav'n on this side Night

In the dun Air sublime...²⁶(PL 3.69-72)

The parallel almost makes a farce out of Cromwell's failed secrecy. Like the Design, Satan's voyage of conquest and destruction fails, and is thus proven to be poorly planned, poorly executed, and overly costly.

This interpretation of Satan's voyage as dangerous and wasteful is not unlike most early perceptions of colonialism in general. The short-lived Roanoke colony of the 1580s, for instance, survived in English consciousness as a tragic and wasteful disaster. Roger L. Nichols holds that "the early record of English colonial activity, like that of their European competitors, ended with economic failure, large-scale loss of life, and considerable violence."²⁷ Any suggestions that England undertake yet another massive settling enterprise must have reckoned with this precedent. Not only did the English waste

²⁶ PL 3.69-72

²⁷ Roger L. Nichols, *Indians in the United States and Canada: a Comparative History* pg. 49

time and resources, they entered conflict and tension with people they wished not to antagonize, drawing England closer to the Spanish imperial model they wished to avoid. Even Jamestown, despite its ultimate success, endured harrowing loss before it would remain for good—hardly encouraging tales for future prospects.

Of course, the danger and wastefulness of Satan's imperialist venture is only overshadowed by its evil. It takes little argument to position him as a moral adversary, but it is important nonetheless to discuss his specific crimes. Gabriel lays them out succinctly upon encountering him in Eden:

Why hast thou, Satan, broke the bounds prescrib'd
 To thy transgressions, and disturb'd the charge
 Of others, who approve not to transgress
 By thy example, but have power and right
 To question thy bold entrance on this place;
 Imploy'd it seems to violate sleep, and those
 Whose dwelling God hath planted here in bliss?²⁸

First, Gabriel declares the mere act of leaving Hell, breaking the "bounds prescrib'd," and entering the already inhabited Eden unlawful. This, along with the crimes of disturbing the "charge of others," and violating "sleep" of those "planted here in

²⁸ *PL* 4.879-884

bliss," reads like yet another condemnation of the Spanish, who did what Satan is accused of by sending their navy out from Spain to pillage, conquer, and subjugate the New World. Nor was Spain alone; England had just begun traveling abroad, claiming foreign territory, and angering native people. Satan, Spain, and England alike receive a direct condemnation, from on high, of their imperial colonialism.

To reiterate, England's attempts to compete with Spain's imperial colonialism resulted in mirroring it. While England originally set out to hinder their Spanish enemies and bring justice to Spain's victims, they would soon set out for more blatantly selfish goals, particularly the acquisition of wealth and territory. The shift in priorities and values is not unlike Satan's when he arrives in Eden. Before he arrives on Earth and even before the council, Satan claims his goals are to surreptitiously reclaim a place in Heaven, which he calls "just inheritance of old," but upon setting his eyes on Earth he opts to conquer and plunder Earth instead.²⁹ Satan does diverge from the English in this regard, in that he hardly hesitates to corrupt and destroy the native people—in the form of Adam and Eve—that he encounters. Although England's peace with the Native Americans was tense and interspersed with conflict, they made a

²⁹ *PL* 2.37

conscious effort to maintain this peace. The elder Richard Hakluyt, one of early colonialism's most enthusiastic supporters, recognized the risks of entering commerce with the natives, especially the disaster that may strike if they and the settlers came to blows:

But if seeking revenge on every injurie of the Salvages we seeke blood & raise war, our Vines, our Olives, our Figge trees, our Sugar-Canes, our Orenge and Limons, Corne, Cattell, &c. will be destroyed, and trade of merchandise in all things overthrowen; and so the English nation there planted and to be planted, shall be rooted out with sword and hunger.³⁰

It appears that the desire not to harm the natives was not necessarily born of compassion, but necessity. The English at least hesitated to treat them with hostility; the Black Legend stories informed them that Spain had no such hesitation.

Satan's allegory drifts slightly further towards Spain in a few more aspects: his Magellan-like circumnavigation of the Earth, his Cortes-like seduction of Eve, and his Columbus-like voyage, which succeeds very much by chance. However, Milton's description of Adam and Eve immediately prior to the Fall

³⁰ Richard Hakluyt (The Elder), "Inducements to the Voyage"

solidifies this comparison, by invoking Columbus by name in the text itself:

O how unlike
 To that first naked Glory. Such of late
Columbus found th' *American* so girt
 With feather'd Cincture, naked else and wild
 Among the Trees on Isles and woody Shores.³¹

This passage—which explicitly connects Adam and Eve with the native people the English tried so hard not to harm, and shows in their last moment in peace before their exile from their joyous and peaceful dwelling—frames Satan's endeavor as a campaign against native people. Victorious, he leaves them ruined, naked, and alone, just as Columbus did.

Thus, Satan employs stratagems that simultaneously resemble contemporary English colonial activity and earlier Spanish exploration and conquest. Milton's use of Spain's colonial history in crafting Satan seems to be just that; however, it cannot be coincidence that this history found itself relevant to England at the same time as the composition of *Paradise Lost*. Would Milton have stomached the Western Design forces fighting former slaves, while posturing themselves as liberators? Would he have supported Cromwell's plans to keep Spain's mines running

³¹ *PL* 9.1114-1118

under different management? Would he have stood for the loss of life incurred in the process, or the warfare that persisted years after taking Jamaica? The answer may be found in his Satan.

However, reading Satan as an imperialist aggressor depends on Adam and Eve's status as native people. When one thinks of Adam and Eve as colonists in their own right, and of Eden as their colony, the other side of Milton's discourse reveals itself. The next part of this paper will discuss how the two of them, as peaceful settlers, prefigure the settler model of colonialism, rather than the imperial.

Settler Model

Before addressing the settler model of colonialism as it appears in *Paradise Lost*, I want to elaborate on Edward Said's distinction between imperialism and colonialism. In this distinction, he claims that although the two terms denote two distinct settling processes, colonialism always follows imperialism, and therefore cannot exist without it. While this notion may be true in most instances, I do not think this works as a hard and fast rule. The examples discussed in the previous section certainly align with Said's claim; Spain's conquest, the Western Design, and the colonies in Virginia and Maryland were

colonial projects that were imperial in nature. However, in Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, colonies emerged with little to no contact with native people and virtually no military force. The people who settled these colonies were not conquistadors, but religious refugees acting on their own accord with little national support. When they arrived, they found a relatively empty pocket of land, leading to a settling process free of the violence that characterized the imperial conquests mentioned above. This, I wish to postulate, is an instance of colonialism without imperialism: an alternate paradigm I refer to as settler colonialism.³²

As opposed to the more oppressive and unjust imperial colonialism, settler colonialism is imagined as the work of peaceful farmers in harmony with their place on foreign soil like Milton's Adam and Eve dwelling in Eden. Whereas Satan sees

³² The definition I use for settler colonialism is not how settler colonialism is typically referred to. Settler colonialism tends to involve, in most other historical examples, replacing native inhabitants, either through violence or integration, with colonial settlers. Although I find this to be true for the settling of New England, I suggest that Milton did not see settler colonialism this way, for reasons I explain in my conclusion.

the creation of Earth as an invitation to go forth and plunder, Adam and Eve see Earth as their home—their bountiful garden to which they tend—much like how the Puritans saw New England. Satan intends to conquer and exploit, while the humans intend only to live; this divergence between the two epitomizes the difference between their forms of colonialism. While Satan travels to Eden on behalf of his home nation in order to claim its land and resources, with no regard for the people who dwell there, Adam and Eve's colonialism not only lacks these traits but exhibits the defining feature of settler colonialism: planting.

The word "planting" appears in a few different contexts in early colonial discourse, particularly from the late 16th century on: planting permanent settlements, planting true religion, or just literal planting.³³ While the first two forms of planting have little relevance in *Paradise Lost*, when it comes to literal planting, Adam and Eve are the poem's only sort of farmers. It is important to consider this in context with the

³³ See the elder Richard Hakluyt's "Inducements to the Voyage", and the younger Richard Hakluyt's *Discourse of Western Planting*. The elder Hakluyt refers to the desire to "plant Christian religion" in his work, applying the term planting beyond its meaning.

Early Modern understanding of "colony." The classical meaning of colony can be gleaned from Columbus' original surname, *Colon*, which Las Casas defines as "someone who settles a land for the first time."³⁴ This definition, which Milton likely subscribed to, denotes simple farming homesteads on foreign soil, with no implication of imperial conquest. Adam and Eve are colonists in this sense, and Milton clearly sees their settling in their Edenic colony as proper and ethical.³⁵

Before I discuss Eden's New World analogue, I want to readdress Adam and Eve's role as native people. For the sake of the previously discussed imperial model, Adam and Eve behave as the native people on whom the imperial Satan preys. Evans and Hodgkins, for instance, refer to Adam and Eve primarily in such

³⁴ Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, edited by Augustin Millares Carlo, pg. 28

³⁵ I wish to acknowledge that although the humans do plant in Eden by way of tending to the garden, there is little that makes it a foreign place to them. In fact, Eden is more foreign to Satan than it is to Adam and Eve. However, Adam and Eve's planting in Eden does, by Milton's logic, cement their sovereignty in Eden, regardless of any foreignness. Therefore, this particular argument will continue to treat Eden as a foreign, colonized place with Adam and Eve as its settlers.

terms. Simply referring to Adam and Eve as native people and ignoring the evidence that suggests their status as settlers feels incomplete. On the other hand, using their settler colonialism as evidence of Milton's full support of colonialism in all its forms is also flawed.³⁶ When treated as settlers, they model a distinctive form of colonialism: one associated with the New England colonies.

One might point out the Puritans' abuse of the New England natives and suggest they were no different than their imperial neighbors. This was not quite the case; before they arrived in New England, a wave of illness had already cleared out most of the native population in a sizable region, including Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. As a result, the Puritans had little in the way of open conflict with the local population for almost two decades. The Pequot War in 1637, in which the natives finally came to blows with the Plymouth settlers, would be the first challenge to the Puritan's ability and willingness to

³⁶ Scholars such as Von Sneidern tend to focus on Adam and Eve's divinely ordained rule in Eden as a metaphor for English mastery over the New World.

dwell in New England peacefully.³⁷ For the most part, before and after this incident, the Puritans would treat the natives not as enemies, but as neighbors and potential trading partners.

What tension did arise came from the settlers' desire to spread their faith to the New World. Carla Pestana makes clear that the Puritans "understood the colonization project in terms

³⁷ This instance of tension was hardly isolated. Even though the English portrayed themselves as civilized counterparts to Spanish barbarism, their own behavior in New England, in both Puritan settlements and elsewhere, was of its own brand of exploitation. They often looked down upon the natives, sought to convert them, and maintained a desire "to conquer" (see: Elder Hakluyt, "Inducements to the Voyage"). However, given the influence of the Spanish Black Legend and Milton's own scope of knowledge regarding English colonial activity, it is fair to say the reality mattered much less than his perceptions in his critique. This goes for his understanding of Spain as well; whether or not Spain had peaceful, Eden-like settlements would have made little difference to Milton's opinion. In essence, the two paradigms of colonialism in *Paradise Lost* are based more on Milton's understanding and perception of these colonization processes, not necessarily the concrete facts behind them.

of spreading true religion to the Americas."³⁸ This distinctly religiously-motivated colonialism existed in nearly all iterations of Early Modern colonialism, but it feels particularly relevant both to the Puritans and to *Paradise Lost*. If the poem is to be read as colonial literature, then it makes sense to incorporate its biblical source to establish its forms of colonialism as having a similar religious motivation. The writings of John Winthrop, one of the architects of the Massachusetts Bay colony, show what Pestana describes as "biblical strictures to make the land fruitful:"

The whole earth is the lords Garden & he hath given it to the sonnes of men, with a generall Condition, Gen:1.28. Increase & multiply, replenish the earth & subdue it...the end is Double morall & naturall that man might enjoy the fruites of the earth & god might have his due glory form the creature, why then should we stand hear striveing for places of habitation, (many men spending as much labor & cost to recover or keep somtymes a Acre or two of land as would procure them many hundred as good or better in an other country) and in ye mean tyme suffer a whole

³⁸ Carla Pestana, *Protestant Empire* pg. 129

Continent, as fruitfull & convenient for the use of man to lie waste without any improvement.³⁹

This passage reveals two points of interest. First, the reference to Genesis chapter one, which appears almost verbatim in *Paradise Lost* in Book 7:

Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth,
 Subdue it, and throughout Dominion hold
 Over Fish of the Sea, and Fowl of the Air,
 And every living thing that moves on the Earth.⁴⁰

In the text, this is God's blessing to humanity to dwell in and enjoy his creation. When read alongside Winthrop, this feels like an acknowledgement and endorsement of the Puritan settlement effort. If the Puritans saw themselves as fulfilling God's "condition" as Winthrop puts it, then they'd see this passage from *Paradise Lost* as an expression of approval. To them, the New World was an empty, "fruitful" space yet to be enjoyed—a space they felt entitled to enjoy.

The second point of interest is that mention of the other "continent" lying empty, lying in "waste," waiting to be populated. I mentioned before that the Puritans settled what they thought was vacant land, uninhabited and uncultivated by

³⁹ John Winthrop, *Reasons for the Plantation* (1629).

⁴⁰ *PL* 7.531-534

the natives. By the time Winthrop wrote this, he and his settlers had made contact with New England's natives, and yet still saw their land as free to settle. Winthrop goes on to address concerns over the natives' right to the land:

And for the Natives in New England they inclose noe land neither have any settled habitation nor any tame cattle to improve the land by, & soe have noe other but a naturall right to those countries Soe as if wee leave them sufficient for their use wee may lawfully take the rest, there being more than enough for them & us.⁴¹

This second passage explicitly states that settling upon lands that were farmed and inhabited by no one was acceptable under the law. Francis Bacon's "Use of the Law" describes lawful property by entry as "where a man findeth a piece of land that no other possesseth, or hath title unto, and he that so findeth it doth enter."⁴² In *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve enter a locale possessed by no one, effectively granting them lawful access to Eden. Therefore, based on this parallel with *Paradise Lost* and

⁴¹ For more, see Winthrop's answers to common objections against the plantation, wherein he claims good terms with the neighboring natives, as well as knowledge of their diminished numbers due to disease.

⁴² Francis Bacon, "Use of the Law", pg. 576

Puritan biblical rhetoric, and parallels with Eden's and New England's settlement process, the settling of both is morally and lawfully justified. Peaceful, plentiful, and pastoral, Eden is just as idyllic a birthplace for humanity as it is a colony.

The images Milton uses to describe Eden also help us understand its role as the ideal prototype of the New England colonies. Thus, Milton often evokes a North American wilderness in Eden's landscape. Satan's view of Eden upon arriving shows us such an untamed, uncultivated landscape:

...and to the border comes
 Of Eden, where delicious Paradise,
 Now nearer, Crowns with her enclosure green,
 As with a rural mound the champaign head
 Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
 With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
 Access deni'd; and over head up grew
 Insuperable highth of loftiest shade,
 Cedar, and Pine, and Fir, and branching Palm,
 A Silvan Scene, and as the ranks ascend
 Shade above shade, a woody Theatre
 Of stateliest view.⁴³

⁴³ *PL* 4.131-142

Eden's "border" region, marked by this "grotesque and wild" growth, starkly contrasts its interior, which is tamed, peaceful, and well-tended by Adam and Eve. The Eden Satan looks upon appears like wilderness with a small pocket of civilization carved out by its settlers. One might argue this as another instance of Satan preying upon natives, but let us remember Winthrop's claim that the natives did not cultivate or live off their land. Adam and Eve live quite happily off their land, tending to it and feeding off the bounty therein. Their lifestyle hardly reflects that of the natives whom Winthrop encountered, whose lands consisted not of extensive farmland, but of hunting grounds. It stands to reason that Satan's first encounter with Eden does not seem like an encounter with native lands but with a pre-established colony.

After establishing Eden as an ideal settler colony, the poem goes about critiquing its flaws. Like New England and its mother country, Eden and Heaven lie in considerable distance from each other, which strains their functionality. Besides being a physical barrier between these realms, the distance also complicates their relationship with each other as governing and governed bodies. Hell and Earth, despite having their own masters, still fall under Heaven's rule; in Eden, this is first explained by Raphael. While Adam and Eve reign freely over Eden,

Raphael still appears to check on them at signs of trouble. His conversation with Adam calls attention to Earth's continued ties to Heaven despite the physical distance between them. Just as this distance problematizes the dynamic between Heaven and Earth, the distance between the Puritans and their home country problematized their ability to settle. Regarding the Puritans, their voyages were aided and made possible by creditors in London, whose continued support hinged upon the Puritans' success. Raphael explains a similar sort of conditional support from Heaven to Earth to Adam:

Attend: That thou art happy, owe to God;
 That thou continu'st such, owe to thyself,
 That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
 This was that caution giv'n thee; be advised..
 And soe are fall'n, to disobedience fall'n,
 and so from Heav'n to deepest Hell; O fall
 From what high state of bliss into what woe!⁴⁴

Raphael relates that should Adam and Eve break their promises and oaths to God, the worst should befall them. This idea that Adam and Eve, like the Puritans in New England, could lose their means of support and be left to their own devices in a strange and foreign land makes Raphael's claims more troubling than

⁴⁴ *PL* 5.519-523/541-543

anything else. When Satan arrives, mankind's estrangement from God becomes a real possibility, besides just a theoretical consequence for disobedience.

Thus, God prepares for Satan to corrupt mankind and sever the bond between them and heaven, setting forth a plan to redeem them back in Book 3. After the Fall, mankind will multiply, stray from divinity, and form kingdoms until the Son bears the burden of their sin. After the Son redeems mankind and frees them of original sin, they will thrive with little but their consciences and prayer to guide them. As Adam and Eve depart from Eden, cast off by their former ruler, they do so with little but Michael's reassurance and "Providence thir guide."⁴⁵ God seems to set things in motion that result in mankind enjoying their freedom as was originally intended.

Remember the evidence which suggests that Milton's ideal colony need not be attached to the nation from which it came, and might prosper independently without external rule or sovereignty. A brief look at the history of Massachusetts Bay will provide precedent for this idea. Even though the Puritans had minor financial backing, they not only emerged independently of the English state, but maintained their independence for decades. Massachusetts Bay was the only chartered colony for

⁴⁵ *PL* 12.647

years to have its governorship based in the colony itself, and not in England proper. The colony's resistance to the navigation acts of the 1660s and 1670s not only shows their desire to remain this way, but also aligns with Bacon's conjecture for the colonies' future: "Surely the merchants themselves shall rise in judgment against the princes and nobles of Europe, for they have made a great path in the seas, unto the ends of the world."⁴⁶

I argue that Milton agreed with this theory and approved of it. Just as Adam and Eve prepare to settle the world outside of Eden by their own self-governance, Milton hypothesizes that the best path for the Puritan settlements to follow would be to do away with their ties to England, living and governing by their own accord. This may be a result of a fantasy about the classical colonist; having survived a harrowing voyage and settling an unwelcoming land, Milton's ideal colonists become self-determining and colonize not on behalf of some imperial power, but on behalf of themselves. This fantasy forms not only in light of the Puritans' success, but in opposition to the state-sponsored Spanish colonies in Latin America, and the English colonies that copied them. Thus, in discussing the settler model of colonialism, Milton may critique its errors, but only as a guide to rectify said errors and teach his readers

⁴⁶ Bacon, "Holy War" pg. 523

to colonize more properly. He does not give the imperial model the same dignity.

Conclusion

What was Milton's stake in the colonial project? Besides *Paradise Lost* itself, the previous sections tend to rely on non-Miltonic sources in determining his position. He hardly participated in early colonial discourse himself, and the politics he did participate in had little to do with foreign settling. If von Sneidern is right, and Milton wrote his epic poem as a strategy guide on how to properly colonize, then *Paradise Lost* would be Milton's only assertion into colonial discourse and politics. This reading certainly makes sense, based on Milton's apparent warning against following the imperial model and his endorsement of the settler model.

However, Milton may have simply included colonial motives and strategies into his poem incidentally. In creating a cosmic struggle between good and evil, perhaps Milton looked to those he admired and despised in his time for models. His admiration of settler colonists and his aversion to imperial colonists may have made its way into his poetry by way of his search for moral examples. This begs the possibility that Milton had absolutely no intention of creating an allegory with the settling of the

New World. If this allegory were incidental, then *Paradise Lost*, while illuminating Milton's colonial thought, has no accompanying political agenda.

So why does the poem bear so much resemblance to New World colonization? Why do Satan's tactics echo imperial strategies of the 16th and 17th centuries so blatantly? Why does the foreignness of Eden seem so strikingly similar to the foreignness of New England? Why mention Columbus by name?

Consider, for a moment, *Great Expectations*. Although the work deals primarily with Pip's coming of age and realization of himself, his patron's time in Australia as a transported convict must be acknowledged. This alone does not make *Great Expectations* about the colonization of Australia, but it does reveal Dickens' participation in a certain way of thinking common to Englishmen of his time. Pip's shock when he discovers Abel Magwitch—a former Australian convict—to be his patron comes from his perception of Australia as the antithesis of gentlemanliness and high society. Through Magwitch, Dickens illustrates not just a societal regard for its criminal class, but for its foreign territory.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ For more, see the introduction to Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, which discusses this example in greater detail than I do, and in a different context.

I believe something similar is happening in *Paradise Lost*. In creating Eden as a newly discovered foreign locale, Milton reveals a certain attitude regarding such foreign locales. Eden is best characterized by its abundance and plenty, which is likely how Milton would have regarded the New World: a place of abundance and plenty. His basis for whether or not these spaces should be settled depended not on the identity of the colonizers, but the nature of the land they colonized. When these locales are populated and cultivated, to settle them constitutes an unlawful invasion. When these locales are vacant, to settle them is to take rightful advantage of untapped resources. The dichotomy in models suggests that Milton saw his country's colonialism as justifiable, if done ethically.

The need for colonialism to be justified complicates this previously neat dichotomy; settler colonialism carries its own brand of injustices separate from imperial colonialism. The land which the Puritans thought to be vacant was still native land, and the misunderstandings following their settlement lead to territorial seizure and open conflict. Adam and Eve are exempt from committing similar injustices, but that, I believe, is the point. Comparing Milton's good and bad colonialism reveals his willful ignorance of settler colonial violence in portraying it

as "good." He sets about justifying it purely in contrast with "bad" colonialism.

I want to take one last moment to discuss why this matters. Just as Dickens incidentally revealed his understanding of the Australian penal colonies, Milton incidentally revealed his understanding of New England and the Caribbean. When creating his foreign Eden, Milton uses imagery unfamiliar to the common mainland Englishman—such as that of the Americas—to establish Eden as an unfamiliar landscape. In doing so, he reveals his thoughts on the American landscape: thoughts concerning how best to colonize it. Whether or not he actively participated in early colonial discourse, Milton still absorbed its ideas, attitudes, and theories; the result, in *Paradise Lost*, is a moral and ideological justification of the colonial enterprise. I want to finally suggest something broader: that this demonstrates the way citizens of any colonial power regard foreign territories, especially their colonies. Just as Milton portrays Eden as a distant haven of abundance and plenty, so did early colonial writers and strategists regard the newly discovered Americas. Colonialism in any form depends on this idea: that before the land to be colonized is an inhabited place with an existing society and culture, it is a resource to be harvested and consumed. To reconcile with the injustices committed in the

process, pro-colonial thought turns to ideological and moral imperatives for its colonization, usually in opposition to some moral adversary. Milton demonstrates in *Paradise Lost* that as a citizen and civil servant to a colonial power, he absorbs this very school of colonial thought.

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