Super Satan: Milton's Devil in Contemporary Comics

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Introduction

On September 13, 2011, Professor Paul Stevens from the University of Toronto delivered a lecture on John Milton's Satan, participating as a finalist in the 'Best Lecturer Competition' hosted by the TVO series *Big Ideas*. Stevens argued that Milton's most impressive achievement is his compelling portrayal of Satan, claiming that "what everybody remembers about Milton is Satan [who] leads us to the heart of Milton's relevance" (*Big Ideas*). Stevens also discussed the impact of Milton's Satan on contemporary literature and popular culture, arguing that Milton's Satan "appears everywhere [and] it's quite extraordinary how that rebellious, attractive figure of Satan permeates our culture" (*Big Ideas*). Thus, as Stevens convincingly argued, the devil in popular culture and contemporary literature, generally, owes much to Milton's Satan. Indeed,

> [f]ilms, young adult literature, comic books, and television series seek out Milton as a mode of legitimacy or as a means of exploring issues of liberty, justice, good and evil, free will, gender roles, companionship, and republicanism. Such texts might allude to Milton, appropriate Miltonic language in surprising or subversive contexts, or evoke, grapple with, or contest Miltonic theodicy or gender hierarchy. (Knoppers and Semenza 10)

Thus, popular culture appropriates and references to Milton, not only for the purpose of its own enrichment and validation, but also in order to explore and explain certain socio-cultural issues.

The influential African American minister and human rights activist Malcolm X, for example, expressed an admiration for *Paradise Lost* as a type of sacred text that can employed for political purposes. In *The Autobiography of Malcolm* X, he presents his radical interpretation of *Paradise Lost* as follows: "[T]rying to regain possession, he [Satan] was using the forces of Europe, personified by the Popes, Charlemagne, Richard the Lionhearted, and other knights. I interpreted this to show that the Europeans were motivated and led by the devil, or the personification of the devil" (Malcolm X qtd. in Wilburn 202). As Reginald A. Wilburn argues, Malcolm, whose indoctrination in Muslim teachings had led him to believe that the white man personifies the devil, accordingly read Milton's Satan as a metaphor for whiteness. Surprisingly, Malcolm concurrently also identified with Milton's Satan as "Satan's view of God as tyrannical and Heaven as oppressive complements Malcolm's assessment of

America" (Wilburn 202-201). Thus, as Wilburn illustrates, connections between radical black theology and Milton exist yet this subject has received very little scholarly attention. Wilburn argues that this oversight derives from the scholarly community's failure to seriously consider the fact that African Americans were familiar with Milton as well as sought to appropriate his writings (202). Wilburn's argument is a compelling and plausible one, yet it should be noted that this oversight arguably also partially stems from the fact that, despite Milton's enduring significance, his place in popular culture in general is often ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. Accordingly, Stanley Fish advocates serious discussion of Milton in popular culture, writing: "It [is] the scholarly community that has been insufficiently attentive to the continuing influence on popular culture of Milton's prose and poetry [but] everywhere you look in popular culture Milton is there, and it's time for a movie titled "Milton in Love." (Actually, it is.)" (237, "Afterword").[1]

Indeed, appropriations of Milton and his *Paradise Lost* (1668) pervade popular culture[2] yet very little scholarly attention—if any—has been given to Milton's place in contemporary graphic literature.[3] As Knoppers and Semenza point out, numerous comic books, too, have been inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost* (4). Indeed, many allusions to Milton's poem can be found in contemporary comics. A notable example includes Mike Carey's comic *All His Engines*, part of the *John Constantine: Hellblazer* series. The title is borrowed from the following lines from *Paradise Lost*: "He [Satan] with his rebellion rout / Fell long before ; nor ought to avail'd him now / To have built in Heaven high towers; nor did he scape / By all his engines" (I. 747-750). Another significant example is Phil Jimez's "Paradise Island Lost," part of the *Wonder Woman*-series. The title is a reference to Milton's poem. "Paradise Island Lost" also evokes the account of the war in Heaven in *Paradise Lost* as it describes a civil war between two tribes, both respectively led by powerful royals.

More interestingly however, is the fact that numerous depictions of devils that appear in contemporary comics and that these Miltonic devils are heavily influenced by Romantic readings of *Paradise Lost*. But what, exactly, entails this Romantic reading of Milton's poem?

[1] Fish's use of the phrase 'Milton in Love' is an allusion to the 1998 film *Shakespeare in Love*, which features Joseph Fiennes as William Shakespeare. In the movie, Shakespeare has a secret affair with the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Shakespeare's impact on popular culture is generally undisputed; hence many forms of contemporary art forms often explicitly and implicitly allude to Shakespeare, or even feature him as a fictional character. By alluding to *Shakespeare in Love*, Fish suggests that Milton's influence on popular culture should be celebrated and acknowledged too.

[2] For an extensive discussion of Milton in popular culture see Laura Lunger Knoppers' and Gregory M. Colón Semenza's anthology *Milton in Popular Culture*.

[3] This oversight can be explained by the fact that for a long time comic books—a medium associated with popular culture—were largely disregarded and dismissed by the scholarly community until the publication of Art Spiegelman's critically acclaimed *Maus* (1987).

Jonathan Shears, who argues against what he calls "Romantic misreadings"[4] of *Paradise Lost* (6), writes that the notion "that *Paradise Lost* abounds with ambiguity and inconsistencies and that Milton's declared paradigm is not sufficient for them all" is a popular and persistent one (Shears 20). Accordingly, the Romantics considered the poem a polysemous work that is permeated with features of irresolution, ambiguity and fragmentation—inherent qualities that enable and encourage alternate readings. Lucy Newlyn, who argues in favor of Romantic readings of *Paradise Lost*, accounts for these supposed ambiguities and inconsistencies present in the poem by arguing that there exists an apparent contradiction between the 'Milton' who is constructed through deliberate and explicit acts of appropriation and "the Milton who emerges from carefully receptive and imitative habits of allusion. The first is a model of authority, intentionality and religious certainty [and] the second is a collocation of ambiguities and indeterminacies" (Newlyn 4-5).

This notion that *Paradise Lost* is permeated with ambiguity and contradictions especially pertains to Milton's portrayal of Satan of *Paradise L*ost, whose moral and psychological complexity has rendered many readers and critics to interpret Satan as condemnable as well as admirable. William Blake, for example, famously declared in 1790 that Milton "was of the Devil's party without knowing it" (qtd. in Bryson 20). Also sympathetic towards Milton's devil, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in 1821 in "A Defense of Poetry" that "[n]othing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost*" and that "it is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil" (qtd. in Russell 29). Yet Shelley was deeply ambivalent about Satan's character. As Jeffrey Burton Russell writes, Shelley insisted that a truly satanic figure was required in order to express the harsh reality of human evil. However, Shelley nonetheless deemed Satan the epitome of the progressive spirit fighting against the established forces of repression. This interpretation of Satan as the embodiment of the sublime, rebellious spirit is in line with the archetypical Romantic hero struggling against the forces of tyranny (Russell 187).

Additionally, on the issue of the Romantics' relationship with Milton, Newlyn observes:

> There is the matter of individual writers, engaging with a particular text in order to define their own creative identities, which asks for the detection and interpretation of

[4] Shears disputes Romantic readings of *Paradise Lost*, writing that verbal polysemy should not be confused with wholesale contradiction (18) and that "Satan's decision to corrupt mankind and the will to turn that choice into actions constitutes his evil nature [and] no amount of rhetorical bluster . . . should convince us otherwise" (184).

> quotations, echoes and allusions. There is also the matter of reception, as an aspect of intellectual history: this requires an account of the transformation of political, religious, philosophical and aesthetic ideas to which Milton contributed, and by which he was himself constructed and reconstructed in the minds of generations of readers. (3)

In other words, there are two ways in which writers integrate Milton into their own works: first, through artistically presenting their interpretation of Milton's works and second, through (re)constructing Milton by appropriating and transforming those ideas to which Milton himself has added. Both acts of interpretation and reconstruction derive from writers' (re)imagination of Milton's works in their own creative projects. In line with this distinction, it will be illustrated in this thesis that contemporary comic book artists, like the Romantics, interpret but also appropriate, propose and subvert the notion of Milton's Satan as admirable, grand and rebellious yet morally and psychologically ambiguous.

This thesis will focus on two notable Miltonic Satans appearing in comics respectively, namely Lucifer Morningstar from Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*: "Season of Mists" (1992)[5] and the spin-off series *Lucifer* by Mike Carey (2013)[6] and Satan from Steve Orlando's *Paradise Lost: Book One* (2007, art by Hugh Vogt),[7] which is a graphic adaptation of Milton's poem.[8] For the analysis of the aforementioned comics this thesis will adopt Thierry Groensteen's approach to comics, who writes in *The System of Comics*, possibly the single most important critical work on comics, the following: "Comics will be considered here [in this book] as a language, that is to say, not as a historical, sociological, or economic phenomena, which it is also, but as an original ensemble of productive mechanisms of meaning" (11). In other words, Groensteen identifies the comic as a unique language, unlike the non-graphic novel but equally significant, as it is capable of generating meaning. This

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[5] A serialized publication and storyline part of the *Sandman*-series. The instalments are accompanied by part numbers.
[6] a collected edition consisting of three volumes, containing all the storylines part of the *Lucifer*-series, which ran from 2000 to 2006.
[7] This comic is planned as a six issue mini-series. House Spirit Press wrote in 2008 on their website that the series would be restarted and continued with another publisher and that artist Toni Gregori would replace Vogt. However, seven years after the publication of the comic's first instalment, the planned sequel has yet to be published. Currently, the first installation of the comic is out of print, but can be obtained electronically; a small number of hardcopies, however, can be found at some libraries, rendering the work, according the Franklin Library, a classified rare manuscript (*Franklin Library Online*).The Franklin Library itself has included a hardcopy of Orlando's *Paradise Lost* in its Milton collection.
[8] Since Gaiman's "Season of Mists" and Carey's *Lucifer* consist of multiple instalments with different artists, this thesis will credit the respective artist when a particular instalment is mentioned for the first time in the subsequent chapters.

unique language of comics is constituted of linguistic codes (text), which are supplemented by visual codes (images); these linguistic and visual codes are mutually informed by each other. Therefore, in accordance with Groensteen's theory, it is assumed in this thesis that meaning in comics derives from the intricate relationship between image and text.[9]

Prior to analyzing the aforementioned comics, the history and characteristics of the modern superhero in comics will be discussed in chapter 1, illustrating that Milton's Satan and, by extension, characters in comics that are modeled after him, fit the archetype of the modern superhero. Furthermore, in chapter 2, it will be argued that Satan from Orlando's comic *Paradise Lost* illustrates and reinforces the psychological complexity and moral ambivalence of Milton's Satan through its ambiguous and often conflicting linguistic and visual representations of Satan. Lastly, it will be illustrated in chapter 3 that Carey's *Lucifer* through the characters of Lucifer Morningstar and God subverts, expands and rejects Milton's ideas about autonomy, authority and obedience conveyed in *Paradise Lost.* Thus, an analysis of the previously mentioned comics will indicate the Milton's Satan's presence in graphic literature, illustrating that the devil in contemporary comics is similar to Milton's Satan in terms of his moral ambiguity but that, concurrently, some comic book artists have reimagined him in order to critique, subvert and reject certain ideas expressed in *Paradise Lost*.

[9] A complete discussion of the relationship between image and text in comics is beyond the scope of this thesis. For an extensive discussion see: Modriah, Hannah. *Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form*. Mississippi: Mississippi University Press, 2012.

1. Milton's Satan as the modern superhero in comics

1.1 The conventions of mission, powers and identity

The superhero archetype is inextricably linked to the history of comics. Between 1930 and 1950, the superhero character made his debut in comics and subsequently partially defined the genre. These superheroes were deeply influenced by the radical social-political atmosphere that permeated Europe and The United States during the Second World War, and were accordingly often associated with wartime patriotism and anti-Nazi propaganda. Superman, for example, was featured in several stories occurring in an alternative history in which Superman successfully eradicates many of the enemies of the Allies, including Hitler and Mussolini. These traditional superheroes[10] were thus depicted as epitomes of morality and justice during a time of moral degeneration. Accordingly, the traditional superhero had to conform to three major conventions of the genre. Keith M. Booker writes that, above all, the superhero must possess superhuman physical superpowers, (such as flight, impossible strength or the ability of transformation) and/or mental superpowers (such as the ability to predict the future or telepathic abilities). Secondly, the superhero must have a pro-social mission which allows him to selflessly employ his powers to fight crime in such a way that it benefits society. Thirdly, the superhero must assume his superhero identity through the acquisition of a codename and costume, which allows him to shift from an ordinary person to a superhero (Booker 606-607). Most traditional superheroes conformed to these three conventions, constituting and establishing the core of the genre.

The modern superhero, however, is psychologically more complex than his predecessor and challenges, redefines and subverts the mission-powers-identity conventions of the superhero genre. Booker writes that the elements of mission, powers, and identity establish the core of the genre but that specific superheroes can exist who do not fully demonstrate these three elements, and heroes from other genres may exist who display all three elements to some extent but should not be regarded as superheroes. "If a character basically fits the mission-powers-identity definition, even with significant qualifications, and cannot be easily placed into another genre because of the preponderance of superhero-genre conventions, the character is a superhero" (Booker 607). These specific superheroes who do not quite fit the elements of mission, powers and identity are typically modern superheroes.

[10] In this thesis, the term 'traditional superhero' refers to the first superheroes appearing in comics that that were issued from 1930 to 1950.

1.2 The history of the modern Superhero

The modern superhero emerged during a period that is referred to as The Modern Age (also known as the Iron Age or Diamond Age) in comics, which began with the publication of Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) and Alan Moore's *Watchmen* (1987, art by Dave Gibbons). This period's comics are characterized by morally ambiguous and psychologically complex superheroes and structurally intricate storylines in both independent titles and traditional superhero comics. "Both Moore's and Miller's work focused on the concept of the anti-hero rather than the flawless and moral hero in protagonists who, despite their superhero status, were flawed and vulnerable both morally and physically" (Booker 13). Moore himself is deeply critical of the superhero genre, advocating and encouraging major shifts within and the development of the contemporary comic book tradition. In 2013, he wrote to writer Pádraig Ó Méalóid,

> This embracing of what were unambiguously children's characters at their mid-20th century inception seems to indicate a retreat from the admittedly overwhelming complexities of modern existence. It looks to me very much like a significant section of the public, having given up on attempting to understand the reality they are actually living in, have instead reasoned that they might at least be able to comprehend the sprawling, meaningless, but at-least-still-finite 'universes' presented by DC or Marvel Comics. I would also observe that it is, potentially, culturally catastrophic to have the ephemera of a previous century squatting possessively on the cultural stage and refusing to allow this surely unprecedented era to develop a culture of its own, relevant and sufficient to its times. (Moore qtd. in Flood)

Accordingly, Moore's immensely influential and popular *Watchmen*, in particular, breaks with the tradition of the infallible superhero through its complex and unconventional representation of its superheroes, the Watchmen, who subsequently undermine and challenge the mission-powers-identity conventions of the superhero genre. Additionally, Moore's *Watchmen* and other modern comic book superheroes—including the Miltonic Satan in comics—often fit the archetype of the antiheroic modern superhero, as they possess both attractive and admirable qualities as well as serious flaws. They also challenge and subvert the conventions of mission, powers and identity of the traditional superhero comic.

1.3 Religion and the Miltonic Satan in comics

Thus, contemporary comic book artists have become interested in the antiheroic superhero, and for this reason the Miltonic Satan surfaces in contemporary comics as he is arguably one of the most famous and influential "archetypical anti-heroes" in English literature (Bryson 77). The devil-figure in general is a recurring character in graphic literature since religion—Christianity in particular—has always been a popular theme in comics. Keith M. Booker writes, "Comics have served as the medium for religious narrative, religious simply for spiritual subtext. Conversely, comics have been used as the tool of religious organizations, creators, seekers, or critics. (504). Booker also comments on the variety of devils that appear in comic books, noting that "most of the major superhero publishers have a multitude of Satan-like or Hell-linked characters [such as] Mephisto, Neron, Blaze, Satannish, Hades, Satanus, Malebolgia and Hela—all of whom occupy a realm not unlike Hell" (508). Given the fact that many comics deal with Judeo-Christian concepts and Biblical characters, it is unsurprising that contemporary comic book artists often turn to Milton for inspiration.

Indeed, Victoria Nelson observes that "the first thing to notice about the Satan of the post-1980 graphic novel is that he looks noticeably more glamorous, in a tortured, Miltonic sort of way, [in the sense that he, like Milton's Satan, is morally ambiguous yet attractive to the reader, partly because he is humanized through his expressions of pain and despair] than his comic book predecessors" (Nelson 85). Lucifer Morningstar, for example, appears as an intelligent, energetic, handsome young man with blond hair, bearing a startling and intentional resemblance to musician David Bowie. In *John Constantine, Hellblazer:* "Original Sins" by Jamie Delano (art by John Ridgway), Satan appears as a long-haired, muscular, dark-skinned rockstar. In another popular comic, *Spawn* by Todd McFarlane (art by David Hine and Brian Holjuin), Satan initially appears as the absolute ruler of Hell, and is later revealed to be a tragic character who is perpetually tormented by the knowledge of his past. Hence, these Satans and other ones that surface in graphic literature are rarely wholly malicious and destructive characters, but rather complex and ambiguous figures, and like Milton's Satan, they are characterized by their humanity and appeal.

1.4 Mission, powers and identity in Steve Orlando's *Paradise Lost*

However, Steve Orlando's Satan in *Paradise Lost: Book One*—an unfinished comic in serial form based on *Paradise Lost*—is not simply a character inspired by Milton's Satan. Rather, he is a visual representation of Milton's Satan within a graphic narrative that retells Milton's original poem. Through his graphic adaptation of *Paradise Lost*, Orlando, like Moore and

other modern comic artists, arguably also critiques and challenges the notion of the traditional superhero since the role of the superhero is fulfilled by an antiheroic protagonist—namely, Satan. Thus, by placing Milton's Satan at the heart of the narrative, Orlando conforms and adds to but simultaneously subverts the conventions of mission, powers and identity of the superhero genre.

Firstly, Milton's Satan resembles the superhero character in general in the sense that he possesses supernatural powers, namely the ability to transform into an animal, the ability to fly and incredible physical strength. However, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Satan's supernatural powers benefit him greatly during his mission, but it is his talent for manipulation and rhetorical skill that eventually persuades Eve into committing sin. Whereas the traditional superhero was characterized solely by his supernatural powers and needed no additional qualities in order to achieve his goals, the modern superhero possesses certain human qualities that can prove just as destructive and powerful.[11] Like Milton's Satan from *Paradise Lost*, Orlando's Satan is a winged creature who is seen flying on multiple occasions and whose incredible physical strength is demonstrated when he breaks his shackles as he and his peers lie chained to the fiery lake (Figure 1.1). Indeed, Orlando's Satan is a physically strong character with other supernatural abilities, but the fact that Satan's goal to convince the rebel angels to "wage irreconcilable war" against God (Orlando 8) is achieved through his eloquent (but fallacious) arguments demonstrates that Satan's most destructive and effective powers include his rhetorical skills and talent for manipulation. Here, Orlando subverts the convention of power of the traditional superhero narrative: like the traditional superhero, Satan possesses admirable supernatural powers, but like the modern superhero he also possesses certain human traits that prove more powerful and destructive than his supernatural powers.

Secondly, Milton's/Orlando's Satan resembles the superhero character in the sense that he clearly has a mission, but his mission to corrupt mankind is certainly not a constructive one. Similarly, other modern superheroes subvert the mission convention of the superhero genre as they sometimes exploit their superhero status in order to achieve their selfish goals. The Comedian in "*Before Watchmen:* "Comedian" by Brian Azzarello (art by J.G. Jones) and

[11] An example of the destructive superhero is The Comedian from *Before Watchmen:* "Minutemen" (2012), written and illustrated by Darwin Cooke. The Comedian is depicted as an unlikeable character with no superpowers, but it is his greed, ruthlessness and occasional insightfulness that allows him to defeat his enemies while fulfilling the role of the costume hero.

Before Watchmen: "Minutemen," [12] written and illustrated by Darwin Cooke, for example, is in reality little concerned with fighting crime and seeks to exploit his superhero status for fame and money. Similarly, Satan's mission is entirely selfish, not selfless, as his injured pride drives him to seek revenge by corrupting mankind, wishing "to seduce them to [the devils'] party, / that their God May prove their foe, / and with repenting hand /Abolish his own works" (Milton II. 368-370). Similarly, Satan in Orlando's *Paradise Lost* expresses his ultimate goal to corrupt mankind as follows: "It is best we [Satan and his rebel angels] work through fraud and guile. He [God] may create a new space, a new world, and on it, a race equal to the sons of heaven. It is there we will strike first. For who can think of submission? War, then! War understood will be made!"(Orlando 21). Thus, like many other modern superheroes, Orlando's Satan has a mission—though not a pro-social one that is aimed at benefiting society, but a selfish one that is aimed at inflicting damage on others.

Thirdly, Milton's Satan and Orlando's graphic version of him are akin to the modern superhero in the sense that they problematize the convention of the traditional superhero's dual identity. The traditional superhero possessed a dual identity, namely, that of a regular citizen, and that of a superhero; also, he could consciously and voluntarily take on his superhero identity just by changing his costume. The modern superhero, however, often has a conflated dual identity, or simply assumes his superhero identity as his sole, true identity as he feels that he cannot be his true self without his costume. In *Watchmen*, for example, Silk Spectre and Nite Owl, at one point do not consider themselves as ordinary citizens any longer, but rather assume their superhero identity as their sole, true identity. This aspect of their identity is illustrated by the fact that they can only engage in sexual activities with each other when they are Silk Spectre and Nite Owl. Their sexual nature is balanced and expressed only when they assume their superhero identities. Nite Owl experiences a further loss of human identity. In Chapter XII, when Ozymandias plans and executes a horrendous attack on New York, Nite Owl comments: "How…how can humans make decisions like this? We're damned if we stay quiet, earth's damned if we don't. We…okay. Okay, count me in. We say nothing" (Moore 20). Here, Nite Owl's use of the exclusive noun "humans" instead of the inclusive pronoun 'we' indicates that Nite Owl no longer counts himself as belonging to that group. In other words, he no longer feels connected to his human self, and will therefore be deemed an unreliable character by the reader.

In Milton's *Paradise Lost* the nature of Satan's dual identity is also complex and

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[12] *Before Watchmen* is the prequel-series (2012) to Moore's *Watchmen*, consisting of multiple instalments by different authors.

problematic. Like some of Moore's Watchmen, Satan cannot voluntarily or consciously assume either of his identities for his shift from Lucifer to Satan is irreversible. However, it is suggested that he at times involuntarily returns to his pre-fallen state by expressing his pain and sadness. Before the Fall, he is known as the brilliant and good archangel Lucifer, but after the Fall he is referred to as Satan (meaning 'adversary') whose "evil" becomes "his good" (Milton IV. 110). Thus, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the reader is presented with two versions of Satan (namely, the pre-fallen Lucifer and the fallen Satan), but it also suggested that his pre- and post-fallen identities are conflated or entwined to some degree. Satan is depicted as someone who is committed to evil, but also as a character who is fundamentally confused about who he truly is. Furthermore, it seems that he at times momentarily returns to his pre-fallen state, as he is still vulnerable to beauty and love. For example, he is so touched by Eve's great beauty "[t]hat space the Evil one [Satan] abstracted stood / From his own evil, and for the time remaind / Stupidly good, of enmitie disarm'd, / Of guile, of hate, of envie, of revenge" (Milton IX. 463-466). Here Satan's encounter with Eve's beauty renders him temporarily good and pure; the implication is that love entwined with beauty has the power to exorcize temporarily all that is evil from Satan, and that even though Satan is revengeful "[his] nature is still drawn to love" (Forsyth 261).

In Orlando's *Paradise Lost*, Satan's dual identity is also problematized. In Milton's poem, Satan's post-fallen identity is symbolized, not only by his name change, but also by the logo of the "imperial ensign" (Milton I. 538) that the rebel angels are carrying. This logo is also represented in Orlando's *Paradise Lost*, connecting Satan to the comic book superhero in two ways. Firstly, the logo is possibly a tongue-in-cheek reference to the iconic book superhero Batman, as it resembles the infamous Batman logo, suggesting a black, winged creature (see Figure 1.2). Furthermore, "in comics, costume and logo constitute the superhero body as publicly marked." Also, mask, costume and logo allow the protagonist in his human state to assume his superhero identity (Bukatman 54-55). In other words, the superhero's acquisition of mask, costume and logo symbolize an identity shift. However, Satan's identity shift has occurred only partly, as it can be argued that Satan returns to his pre-fallen state when the narrator says, "He [Satan] tried to speak. He tried. But in spite of his scorn, he wept. Tears such as those of angels"[13] (Orlando 20, Figure 1.3). Here, interestingly enough, Satan is not called a devil, demon or rebel, but an angel, which refers to his pre-fallen status as God's

[13] [13] These lines echo Milton's following lines: "Thrice he [Lucifer] essayed, and thrice in spite of scorn,/ Tears such as angels weep burst forth" (I. 619-620).

most elevated archangel. This suggests that Satan still holds on to a part of his angelic status through his expression of emotions such as pain and sadness, which implies that evil is always entwined with good and thus problematizes the notion of Satan as entirely malicious. Therefore, by integrating references to Satan's former angelic status into the narrative, Orlando characterizes him as a modern superhero as his separate identities are conflated.

1.5 Authority, Defiance and the Miltonic Satan in comics

Along with the subversion of the mission-powers-identity conventions, the rejection of authority, or defiance, is also characteristic of the modern superhero. In English literature there is a tradition of signifying a character's heroism through defiance. David Elsensohn argues that literary heroism encompasses a rejection of unjust authority, an acceptance of the consequences of that rejection, and willingness to face suffering, death or loss in the pursuit of an ideal. "In refusing to submit to authority when it is unjust, in risking their lives and souls against destructive forces stronger than them, characters take on the role of hero. Whether it be for personal ethics or to protect others, defiance defines heroism" (Elsensohn). In this respect, Elsensohn also mentions Antigone from Aeschylus's play *The Seven Against Thebes*(467 BC), arguing that she "may be one of the first literary rebels to reject a non-palpable rulership concept such as government." When Thebes rejects Creon as a God, she exclaims, "And I reply to your 'authority' in Thebes: If no one else will join with me in burying him, / Then I will bury him, and chance what danger may / Result from burying my own brother. / Nor am I Ashamed to disobey thus and defy the State"(Aeschylus 1026-1030). This passage calls to mind Satan's expressed rejection of God's authority, even though his formulations of that rejection are more powerful. After Satan has been defeated in Heaven, he says the following: "What thought the field to be lost? / 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 [God's] wrath or might / Extort from me" (I. 105 – 111). Here, Satan powerfully expresses his fierce determination to not be overcome for he may have lost the war in Heaven, yet "his spirit remains intact" (Paris 26). A few lines down, Satan again illustrates his courage and defiance as he resolves to wage an "eternall War" (I. 122) against God, rather wishing to fight God than to "bow and sue for grace with suppliant knee (I. 111-112). Thus, in the case of Antigone and Satan, their rejection of authority characterizes them as admirable and heroic. As Elsensohn argues, "it is not merely defiance which defines heroism, but defiance against that which is oppressive, evil or destructive and yet is stronger than the hero."

Correspondingly, many modern comic book superheroes are similar to notably rebellious characters in English literature in the sense that they, too, are distinctively defiant and dismissive of authority. As Geoff Klock argues, "the rebel [in contemporary comics] threatening a new hegemony against the keepers of the old hegemony and the status quo [is an aspect] inherent in the contemporary superhero comic tradition " (129). A significant instance of the superhero's rejection of authority occurs in the comic book series *Justice League.* In an instalment aptly entitled *Justice League: "*Paradise Lost" by Mark Millar (art by Ariel Olivetti), the character Green Arrow brings to mind Milton's Satan powerful expressions of his rejection of God's authority. Green Arrow, criticizing the story's villain's abuse of superpowers for domination and personal gain, powerfully proclaims, "Power without justice is tyranny! Filthy, grimy tyranny!" (qtd. in Eury 216). The modern superhero's rejection of existing hegemony may thus be directed at institutionalized as well as religious authority. A notable example of the modern superhero's rejection of religious authority concerns Marvel's Muslim superheroine Kamala Khan. In 2013, Hussein Rashid writing for CNN called her "a rebellious Muslim teen" for her non-conformation to certain Islamic customs. Additionally, G. Willow Wilson, her creator, commented, "Islam is both an essential part of her identity and something she struggles mightily with. She does not cover her hair—most American Muslim women don't—and she's going through a rebellious phase" (qtd. in Rashid).

Similarly, the Miltonic Satan in contemporary comics is characterized as a modern superhero through his rejection of existing institutionalized and religious hegemonies. A notable example of this rejection of authority is Lucifer Morningstar from Gaiman's *Sandman* and Carey's *Lucifer*. Leonora Soledad Souza e Paula argues that *Sandman's* Lucifer is not conceived as an evil character related to sin, suffering and pain; instead, the character is ambivalent, a being that is angelic as well as demonic (Paula). Additionally, in the script of "Season of Mists 2," Gaiman remarks: "Bear in mind that Lucifer is not necessarily a bad person; or at least, that people can change, and repent—that leopards sometimes do change their spots, given enough time. He's had a long time to think things over, after all . . . and he used to be an angel" (qtd. in Paula). In other words, the transformation from angel into devil does not signify a shift from good to evil, but rather indicates modification. "The character is not directly related to the moral aspects commonly attributed to the corrupted soul. Instead, the fallen angel is aware of possible alternatives and he chooses among them, first rebelling and second abdicating; with both acts, Lucifer achieves changes" (Paula). This abdication of Lucifer occurs in "Mists 2" when Lucifer grows bored with his position in Hell and consequently abandons his post. Paula writes that, in this case,

> Lucifer's conduct in Hell can be read as a wish to enjoy himself in another possibility of life, but also a process of maturing, leaving his “place”, for a second time. By moving to Los Angeles, the city of Angels, and going to a place called *Lux,* Lucifer is being ironic to himself and to his movement of leaving darkness towards light. With this act, Lucifer demonstrates awareness of his changing processes, and lives not as a mere force of negation anymore, but as a mutable self, aware of himself as a construct, not fixed and stable, but changeable and provisional. (Paula)

In “Season of Mists 1” (art by Kelly Jones and Malcolm Jones III) Lucifer summons the Biblical character Cain to deliver a message to God and quotes Milton, saying, “Still. “Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.” Eh, little brother-killer?” When Cain responds: “Suh- certainly, Lord Lucifer. Whatever you say, Lord Lucifer”, Lucifer reminds him, “We [Lucifer and his rebel angels in Hell] didn't say it. Milton said it. And he was blind” (Gaiman 4). Here, Lucifer confuses or deliberately fuses the epic voice with Satan’s character as it is not the narrator who claims that it is better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven, but Satan. Hence Lucifer does not only reject God’s authority by abandoning his assigned post as the ruler of Hell, but also Milton’s authority as a poet,[14] which is ironic since Lucifer’s character is modeled after Milton’s Satan. Through this fallacious claim Lucifer suggests that Milton was wrong, as he is certainly not better off in hell than in heaven.

Satan’s rejection of God and Hell in Orlando’s *Paradise Lost* is more explicit. When addressing to his rebel angels, he says, “We will be his [God’s] opposites in every way!” (8) and “This infernal pit [Hell] will never hold us!” (21). He also says, “The will to struggle! The need for revenge! Courage to never give in! Immortal, undying hate! These things he [God] will never take from me! Never!” (8) and “I am not sorry! I will not change! I do not repent!” (3). Thus, both Lucifer Morningstar and Orlando’s Satan reject God’s authority as well as their place in Hell through disobedience. Since their expressed defiance and rejection of power is inherent in the modern tradition of superhero comics, they are both characterized

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[14] In *“Mists 2*,” Lucifer again undermines Milton’s authority as a poet by expressing his disdain for the tradition of poetry when he sneers, “I watched their [Adam and Eve’s descendants’] strange little fashions. The centuries spent wearing the bodies of animals. The ridiculous vogue for rhyme to denote status—demons who spoke exclusively villanelles, haiku, or triolets” (Gaiman 18). Another notable instance of the Satan figure rejecting the tradition of poetry occurs in *Hellblazer: The End of Rake at the Gates* of Hell by Garth Ennis when Satan tells the dying protagonist: “[I]s it only me, or do poems that don't rhyme reflect a fundamental lack of effort? (31), scorning poetry in blank verse (and by extension Milton’s *Paradise Lost*) in particular.

through their rebellion as modern superheroes.

1.7 The human Satan in Comics

The modern superhero is also psychologically more complex than its traditional predecessor. Modern superheroes are no longer embodiments of justice and morality, but rather fully developed characters humanized through their expressed pain and individual struggles—such as working through personal trauma—which allows the reader to connect with them on an emotional level. The theme of trauma in comics was popularized by Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* published in 1991, a controversial autobiographical comic that depicted Spiegelman interviewing his father about his experiences as a Polish Jewish survivor of the Holocaust. Even though *Maus* is certainly a not a superhero narrative, its compelling portrayal of the traumatized or pained protagonist has arguably partly further popularized the troubled modern superhero in comics.[15] A notable example includes "Minutemen," in which the Polish-Jewish lesbian character Ursula Zandt, also known as Silhouette, is initially depicted as a passionate superhero actively fighting against child sex trafficking by saving victimized children and killing their traders. Later, however, she is revealed to be a deeply traumatized survivor of the Holocaust who struggles with her homosexuality. At one point in the comic, she is seen kneeling in front of a statue of Christ, crying, "He [Christ] is there. But he won't even look at us. Why? Why don't you love us? Why don't you … love me?"[16] (Cooke, "Minutemen"). Here, Silhouette expresses her pain and doubt concerning her sexuality and identity, as it is suggested here that Silhouette thinks that Christ does not love her because she is Jewish and/or gay. This incorporation of the hero's personal struggles and pain into the superhero comic humanizes the contemporary superhero, allowing the reader the sympathize and identify with them.

Consequently, the Miltonic Satan in comics is also sympathetic to the reader because, like Milton's Satan, he is a character humanized through his personal struggles and expression of pain and sadness. In Milton's *Paradise Lost,* "Milton's Satan subsequently [takes] on a number of the defining characteristics of the human" (Rosenfeld 5). Author Nancy Rosenfeld traces the origins of the archetypical human Satan back to John *Bunyan's Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners and The Holy War* and Milton's *Paradise Lost.* She considers the

[15] Possibly the best-known example of the traumatized superhero is Batman, whose traumatic past is revealed in "The Batman Wars Against the Dirigible of Doom" (1939) by Bill Finger and Gardner Fox (art by Bob Kane). The preface to this storyline relates to story of Bruce Wayne who witnessed and was orphaned by the senseless and violent murder of his parents.

[16] Page number not included. The edition by the publisher DC Comics lacks page numbers.

character of Satan from a Romantic perspective, writing, "The Satan archetype . . . is characterized by his humanity: the character [is] no longer the embodiment of evil in the abstract, but rather embodies those impulses of the human that, though not necessarily evil in themselves, can lead one to commit evil" (2). Here, Rosenfeld calls to mind Blake's famous dictum that Milton was "of the devil's party without knowing it" (Blake qtd. in Bryson 20), because he endowed his Satan human characteristics such as pride, stubbornness and vanity and emotions such as pain, longing and despair. The reader thus may condemn Satan for his flaws, but he or she may also deem him a compelling character exactly because of his faults. It is this human Satan, as described by Rosenfeld, that is bequeathed to popular culture through a Romantic lens. Indeed, in the poem, Satan is humanized mainly through his often gloomy and haunting expressions of his emotions, compelling the reader to sympathize with him. After Satan's speech in Book I in which he attempts to persuade the other devils to rebel against their "Grand foe [God]" (I. 122), the narrator writes, "So spake thy' Apostate . . . in pain / [and] rackt with deep despair" (I. 125 – 126). Here, Milton humanizes Satan by turning him into a tragic character, allowing him to voice emotions such as despair and pain.

In Orlando's *Paradise Lost*, Satan too is humanized through his expression of pain and sadness. The narrator comments, "He [Satan] tried to speak. He tried. And in spite of his scorn, he wept. Tears such as those of angels" (Orlando 20, Figure 1.3). Here, the supplemented visual code shows a spatially discontinuous image of Satan's tear-streaked face, exposing only the upper part of his head (see the final panel of Figure 1.3). This panel shows Satan with his eyes closed and his eyebrows knitted together, which is, as George Leonard Carlson writes, a stylistic representation of the character's face in comics that signifies deep sadness (11).

Similarly, even though Lucifer Morningstar from *Sandman* and *Lucifer* is a sarcastic, confident and intelligent character, it is suggested that his deeply cynical nature derives from his concealed unhappiness. In "Mists 2," when Dream visits Lucifer in Hell, Lucifer recalls his fall from heaven, saying "We fell, my comrades in arms and I. We fell … so far … so long … And after an eternity of falling, we came to rest in this place. And I knew that there was no way I would ever return to Paradise" (see Figure 1.4). In this instance, the supplemented visual code conveys Lucifer's expressed pain and sadness, and "[t]he resulting image is neither purely verbal nor purely visual, but a blend of the two [the linguistic and the visual code], and the meaning is based on both aspects. The expression of pain conveyed [in this manner] is particularly effective" (Saraceni 20). The three panels at the bottom of the page that show Lucifer's recollection of his fall contain mostly shades of black and blue, signifying

a flashback (since the preceding panels that depict situations occurring in the present are more colorful) and conveying a sense of bleakness and darkness. The last panel, which shows Lucifer's face in close-up, contains more stylistic details than the previous panel. The image of Lucifer's open mouth, suggesting the act of screaming or crying, and his tightly shut eyes conveys an intense expression of anguish. Within this panel, the visual code is informed by the linguistic code and thus Satan's expression of anguish relates to his realization that he can never return to Paradise.

The theme of pain resulting as the result from unfulfilled desire pertains to Milton's Satan as well as Lucifer Morningstar. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan is not only affected by love, but also desires it. He is extremely envious of but also touched by Adam and Eve, expressing "an inclination to love them, thus surprising the reader with a revelation of desire for love in a figure which was believed to be wholly committed to wickedness" (Kaiter and Sandiuc 453). Becoming a voyeur quite literally, Satan watches the couple make love, and is immediately overwhelmed with jealousy, describing the sight of Adam and Eve who are "[i]mparadised in one another's arms" as "hateful" and "tormenting" (505-506). In Hell, "neither joy nor love [but only] fierce desire" (IV. 505-511) exists; therefore, Satan's desire for love and pleasure can never be fulfilled, and this unfulfilled desire is one of the causes of his anguish. In "Mists 2," Lucifer's unfulfilled desires concern the more mundane aspects of everyday life. While contemplating whether or not he should abandon his post in Hell, he tells Dream, "I could lie on a beach, somewhere, perhaps? Listen to music? Build a house? Learn how to dance, or to play the piano?" (Gaiman 20). In *Lucifer: "*All We Need is Hell" (art by Peter Gross and Ryan Kelly) it is implied that these unfulfilled desires are the cause of his unhappiness, as God tells Lucifer: "You've been unhappy because you've desired things that cannot be" to which Lucifer replies: "That's what desire is. The need for what we can't have. The need for what's readily available is called greed" (Gaiman 32). Thus, as the character of Lucifer Morningstar and Satan in Orlando's *Paradise Lost* illustrate, the Miltonic Satan in contemporary comic books fits the modern superhero archetype in the sense that he humanized through his expression of pain and unfulfilled desires.

2. Ambiguous representations of Milton's Satan in Steve Orlando's *Paradise Lost*

As illustrated in the previous chapter, in Steve Orlando's *Paradise Lost*, Milton's Satan is reimagined as a modern superhero for his Satan fits and subverts the mission-powers-identity conventions of the traditional superhero comic book. Concurrently, however, Orlando also appropriates the Romantic reading of Satan as morally ambivalent and psychologically complex. In this chapter it will be illustrated that Orlando incorporates ambiguous linguistic and visual representations of Satan into the narrative in order to evoke the notion of Satan as heroic as well flawed.

2.1 Visual representations of the heroic Satan

Orlando's *Paradise Lost* is as a conventional comic in the sense that meaning is generated through a combination of image sequences and the integration of text. [17] At certain points in the comic, intricate visual and linguistic codes respectively convey opposing ideas concerning the character of Satan, but at times multiple interpretations arise from a significant discrepancy between the implications of the visual code and the linguistic code within a single panel. This ambiguity pertaining to and discrepancy between visual and linguistic codes allows Orlando to characterize Satan as great and powerful, but concurrently also as dangerous and destructive. In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, too, moral ambivalence and psychological complexity with regard to Satan's character is established through ambiguity and discrepancy between the epic voice's condemnation of Satan's actions and the depiction of Satan as eloquent, strong and intelligent. This ambiguity and discrepancy is not established through the combination of images and text, but within the poem's linguistic code. A.J. Waldock observes that there is hardly a great speech of Satan's "that Milton is not at pains to correct, to damp down and neutralize. He will put some glorious thing in Satan's mouth, then, anxious about the effect of it, will pull us gently by the sleeve, saying: 'Do not be carried away by this fellow: he sounds splendid, but take my word for it—" (Waldock qtd. in Fish 5, *Surprised by Sin*). For example, after Satan's impressive first speech in Book I. 84-124, the narrator concludes with, "So spake thy' Apostate Angel [Satan], though in pain, / vaunting aloud, but rack'd with deep despare" (I. 125-126). Stanley Fish argues that

[17] Comics that are characterized by their lack of text (so-called 'silent comics') exist, and their narratives are constructed solely through visual codes. A notable example of this Ileana Surducan's collection of web-comics, aptly entitled 'Silent Comics.'

> [i]t is the phrase 'vaunting aloud' that troubles, since it seems to deny even the academic admiration one might have for Satan's art as apart from his morality and to suggest that such admiration can never really be detached from the possibility of involvement (if only passive) in that morality. The sneer in 'vaunting' is aimed equally at the performance and anyone who lingers to appreciate it. . . . The danger is not so much that Satan's argument will persuade (one does not accord the father of lies an impartial hearing), but that its intricacy will engage the reader's attention and lead him into an error of omission. That is to say, in the attempt to follow and analyse Satan's soliloquy, the larger contexts in which it exists will be forgotten. (Fish 199).

In other words, Milton undercuts the image of Satan as heroic and grand through the condemnation of Satan’s actions expressed by the epic voice.

Similarly, in a Miltonic fashion, Orlando characterizes Satan as great and heroic, but concurrently dangerous and destructive through visual and linguistic ambiguity and discrepancy between the implications of the juxtaposed linguistic and visual code. In Orlando’s *Paradise Lost*, the visual code mainly works to depict Satan as a (super)hero. His splendor, greatness and power is illustrated through the visual representation of his physical appearance. On the cover of the comic (see Figure 1.6), Satan appears as a winged and armored individual, carrying a sword and a shield. This image of Satan as a warrior refers to the speaker’s description of Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, in which Satan is said to carry “a ponderous shield / Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round” (I. 284-285) and a “spear / to equal which the tallest pine / Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast / of some great admiral, were but a wand” (I.292-294). Additionally, the image of Satan is centralized and emphasized through the absence of other characters; he appears heroic, strong and confident, with his arms slightly raised and his head somewhat lifted, and colored with bold and illustrious colors such as gold and black.

A comic book reader familiar with the superhero genre would immediately recognize Satan’s graphic design as one that has been applied to other famous comic book superheroes such as Superman (see Figure 1.6). On the cover of “Superman #79,” a Superman episode written by Dan Jurgens and Brett Breeding as part of the *Reign of the Superman*[18] collection, Superman appears in similar fashion. Like Satan on the cover of Orlando’s *Paradise Lost*, Superman appears here armored and equipped with weapons, which makes him look like a

[18] *The Reign of the Supermen* (sold in trade paperback as *The Return of Superman*) collection consists of multiple instalments written by various writers. The series ran from June 1993 to October 1993.

warrior or a soldier, rather than, for example, a martyr or a savior.[19] Also, the image of his erect body posture, raised arms and slightly elevated head, is similar to that of Satan on the cover of Orlando's *Paradise Lost.* Thus, by implicitly paralleling Satan to comic book superheroes through the design of his physical appearance, Orlando's underscores the notion of Satan as heroic, powerful and brave.

Orlando also employs certain comic-specific visual markers to characterize Satan as heroic and defiant. On page 9 in Orlando's comic, for example, the image of Satan is fragmented; different parts of his body are depicted in five separate panels that are arranged linearly across the page (see Figure 1.1). This fragmentation zooms in and puts emphasis on specific parts of Satan's body; in particular, the first and fourth panel which show Satan's eye and clenched fist respectively are significant. The fourth panel shows Satan raising his clenched fist and breaking his shackles—a powerful image that suggests defiance and incredible strength. More interestingly, however, is the first panel, zooming in on Satan's eye and eyebrow. In comics, the eyes of a comic book character are conventionally deeply expressive in order to convey different emotions. Carlson writes that in comics "a severe expression, like determination, is shown with . . . eyes open and eyebrows slightly knitted and drawn together" (11). In the first panel, Satan is shows with opened eyes and knitted eyebrows, which suggests determination. Since panels are informed by neighboring images, the first panel is connected to the fourth panel. Satan's conveyed determination in the first panel thus adds to Satan's conveyed defiance in the fourth panel, suggesting that Satan's determination to remain defiant is unwavering and strong.

2.2 Symbolic colors and black gutters

Orlando also connects Satan to well-known comic book superheroes through his use of colors. "Rather than making comics more realistic, color is highlighting the simple message of the images. Comic artists utilize color to highlight their ideas rather than bring them closer to reality" (Melcher). Additionally, concerning the issue of colors in comics, Groensteen writes the following:

> The colors, and in a general way any units of an iconic or plastic nature, are simultaneously informed by the neighboring images and sometimes by the distant images. In short, the codes weave themselves inside a comic's image in a specific

[19] A notable example of the superhero appearing as a savior and martyr is Warren Ellis's superhero from the *Supergod*-series (art by Garrie Gastonny) who appears crucified on the cover of the first issue.

> fashion, which places the image in a narrative chain where the links are spread across space, in a situation of co-presence. (*System of Comics*, 15).

In other words, colors in comics are, more than anything else, symbolic and significant in relation to images; they can be employed, for example, to stress or convey certain socio-political or religious ideas. Booker writes about this the following: "Comic books have from their earliest days been inextricably bound up with politics, [reflecting and participating] in the public sphere, registering and helping to shape popular opinion about political questions such as civil rights, international relations, and the role of government in private life" (470). In the case of Jurgens's "Superman #79," for example, the bold red and blue colors—simultaneously referring to a part of the image itself, namely, the American flag in Superman's right hand—evoke a sense of American patriotism, which implies the political subtext of the story.[20]

In Orlando's *Paradise Lost*, colors are also deeply symbolic, marking Satan as grand and powerful and adding to the religious and political themes that undercut the comic. Since Orlando's *Paradise Lost* contains very little color, the bright cover stands out (see Figure 1.6). The background and the parts of Satan's body that are unarmored are colored with lush shades of gold—a color typically associated with royalty and power. In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, for example, the speakers says that "[t]he imperial ensign [of the rebel angels], which full high advanced / Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind / With gems and golden lustre rich emblazed (I. 538-538); here, the juxtaposition of "the imperial ensign" and "golden lustre" links the notion of sovereignty (which also implies power) to the color gold. Thus, the rich golden colors on the cover of Orlando's *Paradise Lost* give emphasis to Satan's role as the "prince of hell" (Milton IV. 871) and his association with power.

Orlando's use of black and white, in particular, is also significant. In Milton's poem, light and dark (rather than black and white) are recurring motifs. Many opposite concepts and characters surface in *Paradise Lost*, including Heaven and Hell, God and Satan and good and evil. In the poem, light and darkness are significant motifs that underscore these opposites. Light is associated with Heaven and God's grace whereas darkness is associated with Hell and Satan. "Away from God's grace and light . . . abject darkness characterizes his [Miton's Satan] new realm, the Hell" (Tseng 62). For example, when Satan is cast out from Heaven by God and lies paralyzed with his followers in a fiery lake that oxymoronically emits darkness

[20] In "Superman 79#", Superman visits the American president in the White Hound and ultimately saves the United States from a terrorist attack.

instead of warmth or light, the ominous darkness of the lake indicates that Satan and his followers are now in Hell , which is described in the poem as a geographical place as well as a psychological state.

In Orlando's *Paradise Lost*, darkness is represented by the color black, which Orlando uses in his visual depictions of Satan and his rebel angels and Hell. The absence of color (except for black, white and subtle traces of red) in Orlando's *Paradise Lost* serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, the blackness of the images causes the comic to be permeated with a perpetual sense of gloominess and bleakness and unsettles the reader since black is commonly associated with the notion of evil. Orlando's consistent and distinctive use of black fulfils the same function as the epic voice in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, continuously reminding the reader that, no matter how great and convincing Satan may seem, he is in fact a malicious character.

More interestingly, however, is the fact that the gutter—conventionally white in graphic literature—is also black (see Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.3). The gutter in Orlando's *Paradise Lost* is significant because it links Satan's progression through the use of the color black to the notion of Hell and damnation, similar to how Milton connects Satan's geographical progression and mobility to Hell. In graphic literature, the gutter refers to the transitional space that separates the panels. Essentially, the gutter is indicates an ellipsis; Groensteen writes about this,

> [T]he term 'gutter' lends itself metaphorically. We use it to designate 'that-which-is-not-represented-but-which-the-reader-cannot-help-but-to-infer.' It is therefore a virtual, and take note that this virtual is not abandoned to the fantasy of each reader: it is a forced virtual, an identifiable absence. The gutter is simply the symbolic site of this absence. More than a zone on the paper, it is the interior screen on which every reader projects the missing image (or images). (*System of Comics*, 96).

In other words, the gutter indicates a transition, but the visual representation of this transition is absent; the reader is thus forced to imagine that which is omitted. In Orlando's *Paradise Lost*, the gutter usually indicates geographical advancement (a character has travelled in between the panels) or temporal progression (time has passed in between the panels). Since black is associated with darkness, Hell and damnation in both Orlando's and Milton's *Paradise Lost,* the black gutter in Orlando's comic—indicating Satan's geographical and temporal advancement—suggests that wherever Satan goes, Hell follows him continuously

and perpetually. This parallel between Orlando's black gutter and Hell brings to mind the following lines uttered by Milton's Satan: "Me miserable! which way shall I fly / Infinite wrath and infinite despair? Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell; / And in the lowest deep a lower deep, / Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide, / To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."(Milton I. 73-78). Here, Milton too draws a connection between Satan's movements and Hell as Satan remarks that his inner Hell follows him wherever he goes and continually grows more painful. This notion of Satan as irrevocably damned and haunted by (his inner) Hell is thus conveyed through the black gutter.

2.3 Orlando's representation of the meteor simile

Orlando's visual representation of Milton's comparison of Satan to a meteor is also ambiguous. On page 2 of the comic, Satan is falling from the sky, burning and surrounded by smoke (see Figure 1.5). The low perspective of the drawing effectively creates the impression that Satan is rapidly falling towards the ground; the fire, smoke and suggested speed in the drawing evokes the image of a crashing meteor. The page suggests the image of Satan as crashing meteor is arguably a visual representation of the following lines, "Satan stood / Unterrified, and like a comet burned" (Milton II. 707-708). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton thus stresses Satan's greatness and possible destructiveness through similes. For example, the narrator says that that Satan is as huge "[a]s whom the fables name of monstrous size, / Titanian, or Earth-born, that warred on Jove, / Briareos or Typhon, whom the den / By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast / Leviathan" (I. 197- 201), comparing him here to giants ("Titanian") and whales ("Leviathan") respectively. A few lines down, the narrator comments that a Leviathan is supposedly so huge that sailors mistake it for an island (I. 200-208). The Leviathan simile suggests Satan's carefully concealed yet deceptive nature, which "anticipates Satan's misguiding of Adam and Eve later in the narrative . . . and conveys Milton's moral judgment of Satan's character" (Vijayasree 39). Thus, Milton uses the Leviathan simile in order to underscore the notion of Satan as great and powerful but also to hint at Satan deceptive and dangerous nature on a deeper level. Similarly, the Titan simile and the meteor simile in *Paradise Lost* also link Satan to the notion of great as well as destructive since the Titans (a primeval race of deities in Greek mythology) were strong as well as belligerent, and a meteor is a remarkable yet potentially destructive natural phenomenon. Thus, Orlando's visual representation of Milton's meteor simile characterizes Satan as great and powerful, but also hints at his destructive nature.

2.4 Ambiguous linguistic representations of Satan

Like the visual code, the linguistic code in Orlando's comic works to describe Satan as great and heroic as well as destructive and wicked. The linguistic code is characterized by the author's use of intertextuality. Obviously Orlando relies heavily on Milton, as he merges some of Milton's original dialogue and descriptions with his own. On page 10, for example, Orlando's Satan echoes the famous lines, "Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven," which were first uttered by Milton's Satan. However, Orlando refers to Milton's lines "Is this the region, this the soil, the clime, / Said then the lost archangel, this the seat / That we must change for heaven, this mournful gloom / For that celestial light?" (I. 242 – 245) when his Satan sneers, "So this—this is what we exchange for heaven?" as he examines the sandy ground beneath him (10). Using short and simple sentences in a graphic narrative is necessary when for practical reasons since panels allow limited space for words and reading long sentences within a larger non-linear text is strenuous. Thus, Orlando often alters or rephrases Milton's original text so that it becomes more accessible to modern-day readers and easier to incorporate into the graphic narrative.

Besides Milton, Orlando also quotes Christopher Marlowe. On page 1 of the comic, the following quotation from Marlowe's famous play *Doctor Faustus* appears in a white font against a completely black background:

> [Faustus]: "How comes it then that he [Satan] is the prince of devils?
> [Mephistopheles]: O, by aspiring pride and insolence, for which God threw him from the face of heaven."

This instance of intertextuality is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it partly fulfills the same function as Milton's "The Argument" at the beginning of Book I, in which the speaker formally declares the poem's subject, that is, "man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed" (Milton 10), and reveals that Book I will chiefly deal with Satan and the rebel angels. Orlando's reference to Marlowe's *Faustus* at the beginning of his comic is neither a highly formal introduction to the comic nor an invocation by the speaker. Rather, this reference implies the comic's main subject—Satan. Just like Milton in "The Argument" of Book I, Orlando explicitly refers to the devil (and the devil alone, in Orlando's case), suggesting that Satan will be the main subject of the subsequent pages.

Secondly, by quoting Marlowe's character Faustus, Orlando also implies that there

exists a similarity between Faustus and the Miltonic Satan. Indeed, "Milton was influenced by a broad range of texts. Despite his puritan suspicion of theatrical performance, we see the legacy of Renaissance drama—particularly Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and revenge tragedy— in the portrait of Satan in [Milton's] *Paradise Lost*" (Guibbory 72). Indeed, Faustus and Satan, whose ambition and pride led to their tragic demise and eternal separation from God, are connected through their similar, unfortunate fate.

Thirdly, the spatial juxtaposition between this quotation and the continuous image of Satan being thrown down from heaven on the next page (see Figure 1.5) creates an implicit parallel between Marlowe's Lucifer ("the prince of devils") and the Miltonic Satan. The inclusion of Mephistopheles comment that "the prince of devils" fell through "aspiring pride and insolence" serves as a disclaimer, neutralizing the subsequent depiction of Satan as heroic. Consequently, it provides the larger context in which Satan's soliloquies exists as it warns and reminds the reader of the fact that, even though Satan may present himself as a victim of an unjust tyrant, his punishment is just as he has disobeyed and rebelled against God.

2.6 Ambiguity and discrepancy between linguistic and visual codes

Two other instances of significant discrepancy between the conveyed meaning of linguistic and visual codes can be found on page 9 (see Figure 1.1) and 23-24 respectively. On page 9, the narrator comments, "He [Satan] lay outstretched on the burning lake, left at large to his own devices so that he might learn from his crimes" (Orlando 9). The accompanied visual code of the entire page encompasses a series of panels, showing the fragmented image of Satan, appearing determined and powerful as he breaks his shackles and resolves "to find hope in despair" (9). Here, Satan may appear admirably heroic and strong, but the narrator incorporates language critical of Satan into the visual code, calling Satan's actions "crimes." Obviously, Satan's actions are condemned here on behalf of the speaker through his use of the negative term 'crimes.' It reminds the reader, who may admire Satan for his power and expressed determination and strength, that his rebellion against God was morally wrong. Additionally, Orlando's visual and linguistic description of Satan and his rebel angels building Pandemonium on page 23-24 is also significant. Satan and the rebel angels are surrounded by fire and smoke and their superheroic greatness, speed and strength is suggested as they fly, dig in the earth with spears and punch large holes in mountain. The narrator describes the process of their creation of Pandemonium as follows:

> So he [Satan] set out, as did many following his lead, to rape the mountain of its gilded ore. With wild feverish attacks, they ripped into the bowels of the mountain until they had opened a wound in the mountainside and robbed it of its gold. Into the shore they cut veins of fire, gathering the blazing mass together. And they added the ore, taking the gleaming metal from atop the blazing pool—and from out of the earth and fire a huge structure began to appear. It was the construction of the bad angel Mulciber, who in Greece would be known as Hephaestus, who was, while still in heaven, adored for his works. (Orlando 23-24)

In this description, the repetition of verbs with connotations of violence ("rape", "ripped" and "robbed") describing the Satan's and the rebel angels' actions convey a sense of danger and destructiveness. This conveyed sense is intensified by the humanization of the mountain, which is described as having "bowels" and a "wound." Thus, even though Satan and his peers are depicted as great and strong visually, this description of the narrator of the mountain as injured as a result of Satan's and the rebel angels' destructive actions casts them as hostile and dangerous.

Steve Orlando interprets Milton's Satan by visually and linguistically representing him as morally ambiguous and psychological complex character. On the one hand, Orlando visually and linguistically conveys the idea of Satan as great and powerful. On the other hand, ambiguous visual and linguistic representations of Satan and discrepancies between linguistic and visual codes convey the notion of Satan as heroic, yet destructive and hostile. Thus, Orlando's representation of Milton's Satan is in line with the Romantic reading of Satan as heroic and admirable yet morally ambivalent.

3. Lucifer Morningstar: Obedience, Authority and Nihilism

Mike Carey's comic book series *Lucifer* taps into the issue of obedience and authority in *Paradise Lost,* also exploring the implications of philosophical nihilism. In this chapter it will be illustrated that Carey's comic conveys a deep distrust of authority altogether, similar to *Paradise Lost* in its rejection of tyrannical authority, yet simultaneously deviates from Milton's beliefs through its omission of Milton's distinction between tyrannical authority and God's authority. Furthermore, it will also be illustrated that Carey expands the notion of futility that is associated with Satan in *Paradise Lost.*

3.1 Lucifer's rejection of authority

In 1813, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in his philosophical poem *Queen Mab* that Christianity

> inculcates the necessity of supplicating the Deity. Prayer may be considered under two points of view; as an endeavour to change the intentions of God, or as a formal testimony of our obedience. But the former case supposes that the caprices of a limited intelligence can occasionally instruct the Creator of the world how to regulate the universe; and the latter, a certain degree of servility analogous to the loyalty demanded by earthly tyrants. Obedience, indeed, is only the pitiful and cowardly egotism of him who thinks that he can do something better than reason. (Shelley 152)

Here, Shelley, who admired Milton's Satan for his "[unequalled] energy and magnificence" (qtd. in Rusell 187) expresses a deep distrust of the relative virtue of obedience. This suspicion articulated by Shelley is shared by many contemporary readers since "obedience, the conduct corollary to the first human sin, is a particular difficult virtue for twenty-first century readers to appreciate" (Schoenfeldt 363). Indeed, in 1902, William James observed that at the beginning of the twentieth century, secular life was associated with a general decline of the appreciation of the virtue of obedience. The Protestant social ideal that one must self-govern his conduct and profit from or suffer the consequences, James argues, "is one of our best rooted contemporary ideals. So much so that it is difficult even imaginatively to comprehend how men possessed of an inner life of their own could ever have come to think of the subjections of its will to that of other finite creatures recommendable" (James qtd. in Schoenfeldt 363). Here, "[u]nder the spell of a post-Romantic suspicion of the virtue of obedience—a suspicion which the history of the last century has only enhanced—and

influenced deeply by a Protestant belief in economic self-reliance, James assumes that the existence of a rational inner life is necessarily in conflict with the overt demands of obedience" (Schoenfeld 364). However, this is not an assumption that Milton would have shared.

> For him, both before and after the Fall, moral authenticity and psychological autonomy emerge from the practices of obedience. What changes at the Fall is not so much the moral status of obedience as its political trajectory. Where before the Fall, obedience involves the relatively simple attention to a single prohibition, after the Fall it entails the performance of a range of uneasily graduated and interpretatively elusive virtues. After the Fall, in other words, the object of obedience changes from a single imperative to whatever conduct a rigorous exercise of right reason determines. Obedience, then, demands rather than denies the active engagement of the inner life of reason. (Schoenfeldt 363-364)

In other words, Milton does not deem obedience a passive submission to a divine mandate, but rather the core that constitutes moral life and a practice from which psychological autonomy derives. Thus, when Satan claims his right to autonomy by arguing that he and his rebel angels were "self-begot, self-raised / By [their] own quickening power" (V. 860-861), their rejection of God is by extension also a denunciation of reason and moral value from which ethical autonomy ultimately derives. Thus, as Schoenfeldt concludes, for Milton obedience to God requires the painstaking and laborious exercise of reason and does not signify servility but rather the highest form of ethical autonomy (379).

However, according to Milton, obedience to the higher authority of reason is an undisputable good, but thoughtless obedience to earthly authority is destructive, and in many ways worse than disobedience (Schoenfeldt 379). Furthermore, Milton makes a distinction between God's authority and tyrannical and sovereign power by reminding us that God's kingship does not resemble that of the Stuart monarchy when Satan recalls in Book IV. that God's monarchy was no state of tyranny as "his [God's] service was [not] hard" (IV. 45). Milton himself advocated regicide and was deeply critical of regal authority. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* Milton argues: "It follows that to say kings are accountable to none but God, is the overturning of all law and government . . . for if the king fear not God . . . we hold then our lives and estates by the tenure of his mere grace and mercy, as from a god, not a mortal magistrate" (Milton 238). Here, Milton criticizes the tradition of kingship by

contending that for the king to make himself answerable only to God is to render himself a god, heretically contradicting the divine ordering of creation. In particular, Milton was critical of King Charles I, whose reign he equated to tyranny. In *Paradise Lost*, for example, through the character Moloch who is characterized by his revengefulness, Milton arguably refers to and criticizes Charles I whom he deemed vindictive, writing in *Eikonoklastes* that Charles I desired “to be reveng’d on his opposers” as “he [sought] to satiat his fansie with imagination of som revenge upon them” (500). Furthermore, David Loewenstein argues that through Satan, who presents himself as a saint, Milton criticizes Charles I for masking his tyrannical aims with theatrically pious behaviour (355). Additionally, in Book XII, Milton also links Charles I to Nimrod, the tyrannical politician Milton had represented in his political tracts, where he had explicitly compared Charles I to Nimrod. Just like Nimrod, Milton suggests, Charles I was a tyrant and a prosecutor of saints. Thus, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton elevates God’s monarchy and considers obedience to God as the root of moral purity and psychological autonomy, yet is at the same time he is deeply critical of institutionalized kingship, which he connects to the notion of tyranny.

Like Milton, Carey is deeply critical of the notion of absolute authority, illustrating the destructiveness of the practice of thoughtless obedience to (tyrannical) authority. In the *Lucifer* series, the main character Lucifer Morningstar acquires authority through his supernatural powers (which include the ability to predict the future and the ability to create new cosmoses) and it is suggested that his powers are only excelled by those of God. However, Lucifer’s agenda is always self-serving and his powers enable him to manipulate, force and subtly threaten others into obeying his will. For example, in “The House of Windowless Rooms,” (art by Peter Gross) Lucifer attempts to enter the palace of a powerful deity, but he is denied entrance by a monster guarding the gate. Annoyed, Lucifer deliberately blinds the monster with a boiling substance and proclaims, “That’s what happens when you play with fire” and subsequently enters the palace (183). Thus, weaker characters cannot refuse Lucifer’s requests without suffering the consequences.

Even when characters do obey Lucifer, they are still often damaged or even destroyed in the process. Despite the fact that he is called “the king of traitors and liars” (20) by the angel Amenadiel, Lucifer never lies but rather employs ambiguous and cryptic language in order to confuse and manipulate his victims. In “The Morningstar Option” (art by Scott Hampton) for example, Lucifer requires the help of Rachel Begai, a young girl who has accidentally caused her brother Paul’s death. When Lucifer asks her whether she wants her brother back, Rachel of course responds that she does, to which Lucifer in return replies,

"Stay with me [and] you will have one chance to make him live again" (53). Believing that she has no other choice but to obey Lucifer and misinterpreting his words as a promise to bring Paul back to life, Rachel obeys his orders and accompanies Lucifer on his journey. When her grandmother tries to warn her along the way by saying, "[H]e [Lucifer] is not helping you. Be sure of that. Atse' haske[21] has his own reasons for everything he does" (65). Rachel, however, insists that Lucifer is trying to help her and that she has no other choice but to obey him since he is incredibly powerful. During the climax of the story, Rachel gets the opportunity to be granted a wish and Lucifer cleverly manipulates her into expressing a wish that will benefit him. In a fit of anger, Rachel does as Lucifer tells her to, only to realize afterwards that she has wasted her wish and can no longer wish for her brother back. When she angrily and desperately turns to Lucifer, he coldly replies, "I said I'd give you an opportunity. Not step-by-step instructions" (78). At the end of the story, he leaves a grief-stricken Rachel behind, and her fate remains unknown. Afterwards, a deeply dismayed Amenadiel tells Lucifer, "You took advantage of her [Rachel's] innocence and her grief. You have damaged her. You may even have destroyed her" (79) to which Lucifer, indifferent to her unfortunate fate, sarcastically retorts, "There's a whole shelf-load of Christian commentaries about how good suffering is for the soul. Have you read them? They're great fun" (79). Thus, Carey illustrates the destructiveness of thoughtless obedience to tyrannical and self-serving authority through Rachel whose obedience to and trust in Lucifer proves unfruitful and self-destructive. As David Easterman, a character who sees himself as a victim of Lucifer, puts it: "When the Devil wants you to do something, he doesn't lie at all. He tells you the exact, literal truth. And he lets you find your own way to Hell" (Carey 302, "Children and Monsters").

Lucifer himself is obsessed with the idea of absolute freedom and deeply suspicious and dismissive of all forms of authority. On the hand, he embodies self-serving and tyrannical power, yet ironically he is a character who perpetually seeks to fight, challenge and free himself from all forms of authority. Or, as Carey puts it in his introduction to the series, "He's the child desperately seeking for his own autonomy" (Carey 5). Indeed, as the character Maku notes in "A Six-Card Spread" (art by Chris Weston): "Freedom is his [Lucifer's] obsession" (85). Furthermore, in "Season of Mists 2," Lucifer himself explicitly claims his right to freedom. When Lucifer abdicates his post in Hell and orders his devils to leave, one of his peers reluctantly inquires, "Would the Lord of Hell abandon the war with Heaven?" to which

[21] Atse' Haske, meaning 'first angry,' is a demonic character from Navaho Indian mythology.

Lucifer replies, "The Lord of Hell will do what he damn likes. Leave now. All of you." (13). Referring to this part of the story in particular, Carey described the Lucifer character in an interview with DC Comics as follows: "Lucifer doesn't know the meaning of safe [and he] goes wherever the hell he likes, picks his fights where he finds them and generally wins . . . following [his] own will and [his] own instincts to the very end of the line, no matter what the obstacles are" (Carey qtd. in DCE Editorial). Thus, to Lucifer, freedom entails unrestricted self-centredness, selfishness, self-governance and the liberation from all forms of authority.

In the universe of DC Comics, authority is generally acquired through supernatural abilities. In other words, those who have the strongest superpowers are generally authoritative characters, often presented as leaders and sovereigns, but sometimes also as dictators, villains and criminals. In *Lucifer*, numerous deities, demons and other creatures from Japanese, Native-American and Nordic mythology appear, with great supernatural powers equal to those of Lucifer. In the *Lucifer* storyline, they usually serve as Lucifer's foes, attempting to destroy, manipulate or use him by exercising their power over him. In "The House of Windowless Rooms," for example, Izanami-no-Mikoto, the goddess of creation and death in Japanese mythology, appears together with her sons Susano-O-No-Mikoto and Tsuki-Yomi. Lucifer visits Izanami at her palace in an attempt to persuade her into giving him his wings back, which were cut off earlier in "Mists 2" and later illegitimately obtained by Izanami. Izanami and her sons, however, are unwilling to return Lucifer's wings and conspire together in order to trick him into accidentally insulting Izanami so that she has an excuse to kill him. Lucifer, however, neither truly respects or trusts Izanami, nor does he acknowledge her authority, despite the fact that she is a powerful deity with significant powers. Suspicious of Izanami, he quickly finds out about her plot to kill him and subsequently disobeys her orders, first by refusing to participate in Izanami's set-up so that she cannot trick him into insulting her, and then by cleverly blackmailing Izanami into giving him his wings back. At the end of the story, Lucifer leaves Izanami's palace unscathed, but with a new enemy earned. Thus, "Lucifer struggles against a range of powerful opponents, but all of them [including Izanami] are themselves ethically dubious, either equally amoral, overtly evil or just morally ambiguous. They never clearly represent a higher standard of ethics" (King 195). In other words, Carey never allows any moral high ground to form above Lucifer's head, and the conflicts cannot be considered as struggles between good and evil, even though the devil is one of the combatants. By depicting powerful authoritative figures, such as Izanami as well as Lucifer himself, as villains who abuse their power for personal purposes and seek to manipulate and harm those who they deem inferior or powerless, Carey proposes the idea that

all forms of authority are inherently destructive and dubious, and that thoughtless obedience to authority is thus potentially dangerous. In this respect, then, Lucifer, who is characterized both by his exercise of tyrannical power and his unwillingness to be subjected to any form of authority, ironically serves as a model of the rejection of thoughtless obedience to authority.

3.2 The absence of a theodicy

In *Lucifer*, like Milton, Carey is thus deeply critical of the abuse of authority in general, but unlike Milton, he does not distinguish God from other deities in terms of morality and authority. With respect to the latter, it is important to note that Carey never addresses God's motivations for his actions, which characterizes Carey's God as mysterious as well as dubious. Different from Carey in *Lucifer*, Milton presents us with a theodicy in *Paradise Lost* in order to "justify the ways of God to men" (I. 26) Milton attempts to answer two specific questions in *Paradise Lost*:

> I. How can there be evil in the world when God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent?
> II. Why was the Fall not prevented by God since he possesses divine knowledge, and thus should have known that the Fall would happen?

'The Free Will Model,' which is an essential part of Milton's theodicy, may seem incompatible with the notion of God as omnipotent, but Dennis Danielson argues that this is not the case in *Paradise Lost*. Since God has granted human beings and angels free will, they can choose to either obey or disobey God. As God says when observing Satan making his way through Hell, "He and his faithless progeny: whose fault? /Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of me / All he could have; I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (Milton III. 96-99). It is true that God cannot manipulate or prevent the choices that angels and human beings make, but this limitation is self-inflicted, and thus does not undercut, but confirms his power. Also, even though the existence of evil is the result of free will, it also ensures that humans are capable of love and honesty. Therefore, the existence of free will illustrates God's loving and benevolent nature (Danielson 144-146). In order to justify God's ways, Milton must also argue in *Paradise Lost* why the Fall was unnecessary yet possible. Milton depicts Adam and Eve as fallible by illustrating their ability to be tempted; their fallibility allows the possibility of the Fall. Also, even though the Fall occurred despite God's omniscience and omnipotence, it does not mean that God's power is restricted. Because humans have free will, they may thus choose to disobey God. God knows which

choices humans will make, but he will not restrict their free will by preventing them from making certain choices.

Lucifer is different from *Paradise Lost* in the sense that Carey does not present us with a theodicy. Indeed, he has always had “trouble getting [his head] around that that concept [the *felix culpa*]” (3, “Introduction”). Additionally, Carey explains the concept of the *felix culpa* in relation to *Paradise Lost* as follows:

> God threw us a lifeline in the form of Jesus Christ. Christ’s sacrifice redeemed us, and that was such an astonishing thing . . . that it actually made Adam and Eve’s sin into a good thing. It was *better* that they sinned, and that humankind fell, so we could be raised again by Christ’s ministry. This is why Milton, in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, makes a direct link between the Fall of Adam and the incarnation of God in the form of Christ. (4, “Introduction”)

Indeed, there are moments in the poem that propose the idea of the Fall has partly fortunate because its occurrence permitted God to show his love for and mercy towards Adam and Eve. In *Paradise Lost*, just before Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden, Michael tells them that they will “not be loath / To leave this Paradise, but shall possess / a Paradise within [themselves] far happier” (XII. 88-89). Here, Michael restates his earlier promise that “then the earth / Shall all be Paradise, far happier place / Than this of Eden, and far happier days” (XII. 463-465). However, Michael’s promise that Adam and Eve’s postlapsarian existence will be a far happier one than their existence in Eden undercuts the poem’s main message that “all our woe” is the result of “the loss of Eden” (I. 3-4). This paradox is pushed even further when God himself says in Book IX that man would have been “[h]appier, had it sufficed him to have known / Good by itself, and not evil at all” (88-89). Thus, Carey is not quite right when he assumes that *Paradise Lost* proposes the belief that Christ’s sacrifice transformed Adam and Eve’s sin into something fortunate and that it was thus eventually better that they sinned. As John C. Ulreich argues, Milton is not concerned merely with proposing the idea that the Fall, in its consequences, is ultimately acceptable. “Any suggestion that God caused the Fall will destroy his [Milton’s] argument, just as the suggestion that the Fall was necessary for man’s ultimate glory will reflect against the integrity as well as the wisdom of Deity.” Instead Milton has undertaken to demonstrate God’s justice (Ulreich 352). Thus, even though Carey interprets the Fall in *Paradise Lost* as wholly fortunate, the poem itself suggests that even though the Fall has some fortunate consequences, it was neither necessary

nor was postlapsarian existence a better state for Adam and Eve than their prelapsarian existence.

Carey, who has admitted to struggle with his (flawed) interpretation of the Fall as entirely fortunate, rejects the concept of the *felix culpa* in *Lucifer* altogether, first, through the absence of Christ, and second, through the story's portrayal of its characters as irredeemable. Commenting on the absence of Christ in *Lucifer*, Carey says, "On one level. [Lucifer] . . . is a story about a father and son, and their failure to get along . . . [I]f we introduced Jesus as a character we'd be holing our metaphor below the waterline. Lucifer can only be God's son in the absence of that other son [Christ]" (5, "Introduction"). Here, Carey asserts that Christ's absence in the story serves to highlight the father-son relationship of Lucifer and God. Concurrently, however, the absence of Christ also eliminates the Biblical account of the sacrifice of Christ's human life for the redemption of humankind, which suggests that humankind is irredeemable. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, however, contains images of hope in its final lines. Near the end of the poem, Michael leads Adam and Eve out of Paradise, holding their hands (XII. 637). Clearly God, who sent Michael to lead Adam and Eve out of Eden, has not abandoned Adam and Eve. Also, the fact that Adam and Eve shed a few tears "but wip'd them soon" (XII. 646) as they leave Paradise suggests that, even though the couple is sorrowful, they resolve not to dwell in sadness, but to make the best out of their situation. Adam and Eve continue walking, holding hands—an image that suggests love, hope and companionship. Also, "the repetition of 'them,' they,' and 'their' four times in in the last five lines gently confirms the persistence of companionship" (Rajan 60). Thus, the poem ends on an optimistic note, suggesting a possible redemption for humankind.

Whereas Milton implies that humankind will ultimately be redeemed, Carey suggests in *Lucifer* that humankind is doomed. References to Heaven and Hell run throughout the comic, and Heaven in *Lucifer* is presented as the geological location of God's throne and his angels. While most Christian denominations understand Heaven as the abode for the righteous dead in the afterlife, *Lucifer* suggests that no human, righteous or not, ever goes to Heaven. Near the end of "All We Need is Hell," Lucifer recalls an old conversation he had with Dream just before he abandoned his post Hell. He tells Dream, "Why do they [humans] blame me for all their little failings? I never made one of them do anything. And then they die and come here [to Hell], having transgressed what they believed to be right" (22-23). Here, Lucifer's use of the pronoun "they" refers to all humans. Thus his statement suggests that all humans eventually go to Hell, implying that humankind will never receive God's salvation, which negates humankind's ultimate redemption anticipated in *Paradise Lost*. Thus, as Lucifer

concludes, "[i]nocence, once lost, can never be regained"[22] ("Mists 2," 19).

3.3 Carey's flawed and amoral God

Since the concept of the *felix culpa* is rejected in *Lucifer*, Carey's objective, then, is not only to explore the notion of total freedom and autonomy, but also to undercut Milton's justification of God's ways to men. In *Lucifer*, which starts right after Lucifer's resignation in "Season of Mists," we never learn why God has allowed evil to exist in the world and why he did not prevent the Fall from happening. Additionally, Carey's depiction of God in *Lucifer* is quite different from Milton's. God is largely absent in the story, and the nature of his character is implied through the references made to him by the narrator and other characters. For example, in "Six-Card," the narrator says: "This is what God felt like when he made the world. This why he did it. For the high. For the power" (136). Here, the narrator asserts that God did not create the world out of benevolence, but simply because he enjoyed the exercise of his powers, which implies that God's motivations, too, are ultimately self-serving. Also, it is suggested that God is not omnipotent. As Charles W. King, writes, "He [God] is just another amoral schemer, whose powers and predictions have significant limitations, and whose schemes—particularly in relation to Lucifer—have a notable tendency to fail" (196). Thus, God and Lucifer are similar in the sense that they are both amoral, self-interested and possess significant but flawed powers.

These similarities between God and Lucifer are underscored through the spatial positioning of their visual representations. In panels that show God and Lucifer together, they are always placed opposite of each other (see Figure 1.7). On a superficial level, this visual juxtaposition calls to mind their antagonistic relationship. However, by visually juxtaposing God and Lucifer within a single panel, the striking similarities between their character designs become evident. First, it is significant to note that God and Lucifer appear to be equal in height, and second, that the visual representation of both lack the presence of symbolic colors. Scott McCloud writes that the height and posture of characters in comics are significant, arguing that "whether it comes from our old mammalian combat instincts or the parent child archetype, the ideas of height as power can still be seen in everything from ceremonies to architecture." When multiple characters are depicted within a single panel, physical tallness and signifies power and authority and shortness humbleness and obedience (McCloud 105). In other words, in the case of *Lucifer* one would expect Lucifer, the child and the inferior one in

[22] A reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*

terms of power, to appear shorter than God, the superior father. Therefore, the fact that God and Lucifer appear equally tall suggests that they are equals in one way or another. They are certainly not equals in power as it already has been revealed that God's powers surpass Lucifer's; rather, the fact that they are equal in height arguably calls to mind Lucifer's unwillingness to obey and be dwarfed by God's authority.

Additionally, Lucifer and God are linked through the absence of colors (save for black) in their visual representations (see Figure 1.7). The fact that both characters appear dressed in black is striking as one might expect God to be characterized by the color white, since black and white are widely used to depict opposites. Visually, black and white offer a high contrast. In Western culture, white and black traditionally symbolize the dichotomy of good and evil, metaphorically related to light and darkness and day and night. In *Paradise Lost*, too, black and white, or rather light and darkness, are recurring symbols. Light is associated with God and Heaven and darkness with Satan and Hell. However, Carey does not make symbolic use of light and darkness, or black and white, in order to signify the dichotomy of good and evil. Rather, his use of black arguably symbolizes moral ambivalence. Thus, by depicting God and Lucifer dressed in black, Carey suggests that they are similar to each other in the sense that they are both morally ambiguous.

It is also implied in *Lucifer* that God's omniscience has significant limitations. In "Mists 2," while recalling his fall from Heaven, Lucifer wonders, "I still wonder how much of it [Lucifer's rebellion] was planned. How much he knew of it in advance" (15, see Figure 1.4). Here, Lucifer expresses a degree of certainty about God's foreknowledge concerning Lucifer's Fall, which suggests that God's providence is limited. God himself appears in the last issue of the *Lucifer* series as an undistinguished looking man, dressed in black and white and a bowler hat. As King writes, he does not embody omniscient power, infallible wisdom, or cosmic justice. Toward the end of the *Lucifer* series, God himself retires, leaving control of the universe to whoever can claim it, which leads to more conflict and resolves none of the problems. God is just another schemer like Lucifer, and, in the end, even less successful, for he fails repeatedly to manipulate Lucifer (King 198). When it becomes evident that God's management strategy is flawed, he too leaves his responsibility behind, allowing a young girl named Elaine Belloc to be installed as the new supreme deity. Thus, unlike Milton's God, Carey's God is not omnibenevolent nor infallible; also, his omniscience is restricted.

3.4 The implications of existential and metaphysical nihilism

Lastly, a point has to be made about the futility of Carey's Lucifer's and Milton's Satan's

quest for autonomy. In both *Lucifer* and *Paradise Lost*, the devil attempts to acquire total autonomy by rebelling against God, but their rebellion proves to be meaningless in both narratives. In *Paradise Lost*, "Satan . . . is motivated by pure hatred, but such consuming hatred can never be a motive in any superficial causal sense; it is, rather, a destructive, almost nihilistic, emotive force stirred up from the 'bottom' of Satan's despairing consciousness" (Reisner 51). Also, Galbraith Miller Crump writes that Satan's denial of the origins of his creation in lines V.856-859[23] signifies the nihilism at the very core of his being (117). Indeed, in line with Satan's nihilistic drive, Satan's actions in *Paradise Lost* are always proven to be pointless and ultimately fruitless. For example, the war in Hell narrated in retrospect by Raphael in Book VI seems entirely pointless. Angels are immortal so apart from inflicting physical pain, they cannot seriously harm or kill each other. However, Satan, who is utterly blinded by his ambition and determination, still forces himself and his troops to fight God in Heaven. Even when he and his troops fail to win, they still continue to hope for victory. However, the fact that Satan will be defeated eventually is never in doubt; Satan, though, is too self-deluded to realize futility of his attempts. His ultimate unfortunate fate underscores the futility and meaninglessness of his actions. In the end, Satan does succeed in causing the Fall of Adam and Eve, but is severely punished by God for it: after the Fall, Satan and his rebel angels are doomed to dwell in Hell forever.

The *Lucifer* series taps into and expands this sense of meaninglessness and futility associated with Satan's actions in *Paradise Lost*, exploring and asserting the philosophical implications of existential and metaphysical nihilism. Concerning the latter, *Lucifer* is similar to *Paradise Lost* in the sense that God in Lucifer is the creator of the world, but concurrently diverts from Milton's poem by asserting that the world, ultimately, does not truly exist. In "Hell," the narrator says,

> There is nothing. There is, has been, will be nothing. All the same, always. . . . Creations rise and then they fall. Each, so long as it exists, seeming to fill, the immensity of the void with the teeming, proliferating certainties of direction and purpose. But since the void is infinite and eternal—the portion of it that can be filled amounts, in the end, to zero." (2-6)

[23] Satan denies the origins of his creation when says to the other rebel angels: "[R]ememberst thou / Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being? We know no time when we are not as now / Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd / By our our own quick'ning power."

Here, by asserting that nothing exists, the narrator first denies the existence of creations, but then paradoxically formulates the argument that the universe's infinity reduces the creations and everything that it holds to non-existence.[24] By extension, one's sense of purpose and direction that is established through creation ultimately does not exist either. Thus, these implications associated with metaphysical nihilism that pervade the comic are extended to the idea that not only that the universe as we know it does not exist, but that existence itself is pointless and meaningless as well. As Alan Pratt writes, "[e]xistential nihilism begins with the notion that the world is without meaning or purpose. Given this circumstance, existence itself—all action, suffering, and feeling—is ultimately senseless and empty." In *Lucifer*, this idea of all action as ultimately meaningless and senseless is conveyed through the conversation between the demon Azazel and Lucifer:

> [Azazel]: Is it [Hell] not wonderful, Morningstar?
> [Lucifer]: Miraculous, Azazel. What exactly is the point of it?
> [Azazel]: Why—to magnify your glory, my Lord.
> [Lucifer]: My status isn't conditional on the suffering of others. ("Hell," 16)

Here, Lucifer is aware of the fact that his rebellion has rendered him the ruler of his own realm, yet this position does not elevate his status nor mend his hurt pride. Thus, Lucifer, unlike Milton's Satan, is able to articulate and acknowledge the meaninglessness of his actions.[25] This realization drives Lucifer to attempt to free himself from God's providence, or as Carey puts it, to establish "a definition of himself that springs entirely from himself, and owes nothing to anyone else" (5, "Introduction"). Indeed, Lucifer tells God, "I am myself. Not a limb or an organ of yours. I separate myself from you" (13, "Hell"). However, Lucifer's quest for total autonomy proves unsuccessful again. At one point in the series, Lucifer believes that he has freed himself from God's providence and employs his powers to create another universe. However, at the end of the series, God reveals that he had known of Lucifer's plans all along when he narrates Wu Cheng-En's tale of Buddha and the monkey

[24] The notion that nothing truly exist is reinforced through the visual code near the end of "Hell." When Lucifer travels outside the universe, he sees something resembling comic book panels showing events that have already taken place in the comic. The fact that these panels and the events that they show exist outside the universe evokes a sense of non-existence. Thus, this instance of metafiction emphasizes the artificiality and the possible non-existence of objects and action.

[25] It should be noted that Satan denies the nature of his origins in *Paradise Lost*, which underscores his nihilistic drive, but that Lucifer does acknowledge God as his creator in "Hell," telling him in "[y]ou are the Maker, Father" (13).

king.[26] The connection between the monkey king and Lucifer is clear. Like the monkey king, Lucifer attempted to demonstrate his power and wit, only to find out that his rival's foreknowledge of his plans signifies that his rival's power is greater than his. When it becomes clear to Lucifer that the monkey king represents him and Buddha God, he replies angrily, "In context, I find that pretty offensive" to which God simply replies "Perhaps it is. I was making a point about futility" (33, "Hell," see Figure 1.7). Indeed, the tale and God's confession that he had been aware of Lucifer's moves all along proves the futility of Lucifer's attempt to free himself from God's Providence. God expresses the pointlessness of Lucifer's attempts when he tells Lucifer, "You cannot be your own maker, Samael. You've been unhappy because you've desired things that cannot be" (33, see Figure 1.7).

In other words, Lucifer wish to be separated from and defined without God is impossible, and this unfulfilled desire is the source of his unhappiness. Lucifer replies to God's observation: "Futile or not, my struggle against you has shaped me into what I am" (34, "Hell"). This particular moment is perhaps the story's most significant key moment. Here, Lucifer recognizes that his rebellion may have been fruitless but that his fight against God is the foundation of his identity. Therefore, similar to Satan in *Paradise Lost*, Lucifer's fight against God proves futile in the sense that Lucifer cannot and never will surpass his creator. Also, Lucifer's ironic assertion that his fight against God is his identity proves that he has failed to establish a definition of himself that derives entirely from himself as his identity emerges in relation to and is dependent on his relationship with God.

Furthermore, the novel's anticlimactic conclusion negates the significance of Lucifer's assertion of his identity through visual and linguistic codes that convey images that are linked to the concept of (existential) nihilism. Before God and Lucifer part after their meeting in "Hell," God speaks to Lucifer for the last time, telling him, "I give you my blessing and this time my promise too. I will not see you again" (38, "Hell"). Ambiguity pervades God's final words to Lucifer. On the hand, God arguably simply implies here that he and Lucifer will never meet again, yet his use of "see," represented in a bold font, is striking, and may indicate that God has resolved to fulfil Lucifer's wish and will no longer use his providence to anticipate Lucifer's actions. The fact that the comic does not offer a final answer to this

[26] The monkey king, or Sun Wukong, from the Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West* by Wu Chen-en is a character who rebelled against God in Heaven and was subsequently sent to Earth. The tale that God tells Lucifer is about Wukong's attempt to prove that he is greater than Buddha. Wishing to prove his power, Wukong leaps across all the worlds, until he lands on the other side of infinity where five columns hold up the roof of the sky. To prove that he has been there he carves his name on the middle column. When he boasts about this to Buddha later, Buddha raises his right hand and shows Wukong his middle finger which has Wukong's signature written on it.

question appears anticlimactic, but this instance of narrative ambiguity adds to the notion of existential nihilism that runs through the final issue of the series as it implies that it ultimately does not matter whether Lucifer's wishes are fulfilled. This sense of existential nihilism is again underscored on the last page of the comic as the narrator concludes: "It is hard to tell whether he [Lucifer] imposes himself on emptiness—or becomes it" (39, "Hell"). This final line appears against a white background, and the absence of color and images conveys a sense of nothingness. Here, the notion of existential nihilism becomes even more explicit when the narrator suggests that Lucifer is eventually literally reduced to nothingness, which suggests that all his endeavors and desires are is ultimately insignificant, powerfully reinforcing the series' last installment's main message that "[a]ll things come back to nothing" (6, :"Hell").

In *Lucifer*, Carey expresses a post-Romantic suspicion of the relative virtue of obedience, not because the existence of a rational inner life is incompatible with the explicit demands of obedience, but because every figure that possesses significant, or even all-encompassing power and demands obedience is inherently amoral. Whereas Milton deemed obedience to God the highest form of innate morality and psychological autonomy, different from thoughtless obedience to tyrannical, earthly authority, Carey does not make this distinction. Instead, he reimagines God as a flawed, self-serving and amoral figure, implicitly paralleling him to the other deities, demons and kings, and even Lucifer himself—characters who abuse their authority for their own purposes. Lucifer, then, is not quite the energetic and magnificent hero like Shelley's interpretation of Milton's Satan, but rather a morally ambiguous and tyrannical character. Through this parallel between God and tyrannical authority, and through his depiction of God as flawed and amoral, Carey suggests that every form of absolute power, including that of Lucifer and God, is ultimately self-serving and employed for tyrannical purposes. Thus, by extension it is suggested in *Lucifer* that obedience to authority is always thoughtless and self-destructive. Furthermore, by reimagining God as a flawed and amoral authoritative figure while linking him to the notion of tyrannical power, Carey eliminates the idea, central to *Paradise Lost*, that obedience to God as a practice of reason and a sign of morality and ethical autonomy. Lucifer, then, is not presented as a rebel angel whose rejection of God is a sign of moral degradation and a denunciation of reason, but rather as a revolutionary who seeks to free himself of every form of absolute authority, including God's, whose power is characterized in the story as inherently oppressive as well as amoral. However, the conclusion of the series also makes a point about metaphysical and existential nihilism, expounding the sense of futility of Satan's rebellion against God in *Paradise Lost*, implying that Lucifer's actions, ultimately, do not matter as they prove

unsuccessful and meaningless. Essentially, Carey's *Lucifer* is a story that eliminates "the clear-cut opposition of good and evil or even the possible existence of moral absolutes such as good or evil. The resulting story exists entirely in a grey zone of amoral power struggles that are memorable for their refusal to conform with traditional dichotomies of sin and virtue" (King 198).

Conclusion

Since the emerging popularity of the antiheroic superhero, or the modern superhero, in graphic literature, contemporary comic book artists have turned to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and his Satan for inspiration. Similar to Romantic writers, who sought to interpret Milton but also to subvert, transform and expand his ideas, contemporary comic book artists, too, have interpreted, appropriated and subverted Milton's *Paradise Lost.* This can be observed from the fact that the devil in contemporary comics is characterized, similar to Romantic readings of Milton's Satan, as psychologically complex and morally ambiguous. Additionally, some contemporary comic book artists do not simply artistically represent their interpretation of Milton's Satan, but rather present a reimagination of him, inducing novel interpretations and critiques of certain ideas expressed in *Paradise Lost.* On the one hand, Steve Orlando's eponymous graphic adaptation of *Paradise Lost* presents a creative reimagination of Milton's Satan by depicting him as a modern superhero. On the other hand, Orlando's Satan exemplifies Romantic readings of Milton's Satan as it depicts Satan as psychologically complex and morally ambivalent through ambiguous and often conflicting visual and linguistic representations.

Additionally, through Lucifer Morningstar from Mike Carey's *Lucifer* and Neil Gaiman's "Season of Mists," the respective artists also reimagine and redefine the Miltonic Satan for Lucifer is not simply a graphic representation of Milton's Satan, but rather a character modeled after him. In *Lucifer*, Carey taps into the sense of futility associated with Satan in *Paradise Lost* by depicting Lucifer's fight for autonomy as pointless as well as fruitless. By expanding on the notion of Satan's fight against God as futile, Carey conforms to Milton's implication in *Paradise Lost* that total autonomy can never be obtained through disobedience to God. Concurrently, however, Carey diverts from dichotomies of good and evil, which are equated in *Paradise Lost* with God and Satan respectively, as God and Satan are depicted as equally flawed, tyrannical and morally ambiguous in *Lucifer*. This parallel allows Carey to reject Milton's theodicy and ideas about authority and obedience expressed in *Paradise Lost*.

Milton's presence in comics inevitably raises the question of why comic book artists might turn to such a major canonical writer for inspiration. In chapter 1, the argument that Milton's Satan easily lends himself to be reimagined as a modern superhero has been proposed, but this argument alone is not sufficient to account for all allusions to Milton in contemporary comics. In order to account for Milton's presence in comics, it is useful to note

that comic books artists have not only turned to Milton for inspiration, but also to other canonical and often radical writers.[27] This attraction to progressive writers such as Milton and Blake can be understood in relation to the status of the comic as a medium struggling to attain recognition. As Groensteen observes, comic books are still suffering from a "considerable lack of legitimacy [and it] is curious that the legitimizing authorities still regularly charge it with being infantile, vulgar or insignificant. Comic art suffers from an extraordinarily narrow image, given the richness and diversity of its manifestations" (*Comics and Culture*, 1). However, since the 1960s up until now, comic book artist have sought to move away from the comic's status as an insignificant and light-hearted pop-culture phenomenon by, for example, introducing the critical term 'graphic novel' and by producing the politically charged and provocative underground comix.[28] In this respect then, contemporary comic book artists arguably identify with writers such as Blake and Milton, whom they deem radical and progressive figures who sought to break with tradition as well. Arguably voicing the author's beliefs, Rorsach from *Watchmen* illustrates in Chapter II this view of writers such as Milton and Blake as progressive well, proclaiming: "Blake understood. He saw the cracks in society, saw the little men in masks trying to hold it together. He saw the true face of the twentieth century and chose to become a reflection of it, a parody of it. No one else saw the joke. That's why he was lonely" (Moore 27-28).

Another explanation that may account for Milton's presence in comics concerns the link between the inherently polysemous nature of popular texts and the attraction to ambivalence in relation to *Paradise Lost*. Challenging the notion of popular culture as definite, John Fiske argues that polysemy and semiotic richness are typical features of popular texts, turning them into "resource banks of possible meanings." This inherent ambiguity enables the reader of a popular text "to partake of both its forces simultaneously and devolves to them the power to situate themselves within this play of forces at a point that meets [his] cultural interests" (Fiske 4). In other words, popular texts are constructed in such a way that

[27] Notable examples include Alan Moore's *Watchmen* (mentioned in chapter 1), which frequently alludes to William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley, the numerous adaptations of Frankenstein's monster from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in comics and the appearance of Edgar Allan Poe as a fictional character in the mini-series *Batman: Nevermore* (2003) by Len Wei.

[28] In the 1960s, in reaction to the light-hearted pre-60s comic book, more provocative and independently produced comics were issued. These comics were often politically charged, convention-defying and permeated with depictions of (sexual) violence; later these comics were called underground comix. In particular, through its simplistic style and often shocking content, these comix sought to break with the tradition of the light-hearted comic book. In the mid-seventies, however, the underground comix was already disappearing but its convention of critiquing of politics, religion and social norms was incorporated into the mainstream comic.

the reader is able to attribute a particular meaning to a text while ignoring other possible meanings. Therefore, as a popular text, the comic book too is constructed in such as a way that it allows for multiple interpretations. In relation to the former, Shears observes that the gradual secularization of literary criticism that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth century, inspired by Shelley and Blake and emerging general liberalism, has popularized polysemous and ambiguous readings of *Paradise Lost* (6). Therefore, arguably exactly because of the popular text's inclination to polysemy, comic book artists have appropriated and drawn inspiration from Romantic readings of canonical works such as *Paradise Lost* that propose polysemy and ambiguity, using Milton's poem, like the Romantics, "as a springboard from which to launch their own poetic projects" (Shears 6).

Milton's place in comics, and by extension, in popular culture in comics, has been overlooked for a long time. Knoppers' and Semenza's anthology *Milton in Popular Culture*, consisting of collected essays, is one of the very few critical works that seek to shed light on and consider Milton's presence in various media associated with popular culture. However, Knoppers and Semenza's anthology does not include a discussion of graphic literature in relation to Milton since this subject remains a little discussed aspect of studies concerned with Milton and popular culture. This thesis has indicated Milton's undeniable presence in graphic literature through a consideration of one particular aspect of Milton's work, namely Satan from *Paradise Lost*, subsequently connecting Milton's Satan to devil characters in contemporary comics. Since the comic book is a vital and inextricable part of media associated with popular culture, the presence of Milton in comics illustrates Milton's continuing popularity and the enduring significance of his *Paradise Lost*. In general, this suggests that popular culture seeks to appropriate and (re)interpret works of canonical writers, becoming a part of and adding to the reception history of those works it is concerned with.

It should be noted that, like non-graphic books, a great number of endlessly diverse comic books exist. This study has only considered three graphic works featuring devils that are clearly inspired by Milton's Satan. However, it should be noted that more significant devil characters—who are perhaps less obviously inspired by Milton's Satan but still Miltonic in some aspects—surface in other graphic works but these are not considered in this thesis. Also, regarding the character of Lucifer Morningstar, it is important to note that this character appears in two other comic books, namely in *Weird Mystery Tales*: "The Devil to Pay" by Jack Olecko and in *The New 52,* a series written by various DC comic book artists. However, since the character plays only a minor role in these works, these comics are disregarded in this thesis. Furthermore, pertaining to the medium of comics, this study has

focused solely on the Anglo-American comic tradition, disregarding comics associated with the Franco-Belgian, European and Japanese traditions.[29] However, even though other useful works have been disregarded, the strong Miltonic subtext in and relevance of the comics considered in this thesis have allowed for the establishment of a starting point of the exploration of the subject of Milton's Satan in contemporary comics.

Future research could elaborate on the elevated position of canonical writers in comics, establishing a firm connection between the nature of contemporary comics and the intellectual history of those canonical works it references to. In particular, an assessment of the presence of Romantic writers such as William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley in comics may further illustrate how comics, and by extension all media associated with popular culture, appropriate but also expand and subvert pre-existing, conventional interpretations of certain canonical works. Also, future research could expand the list of comics to consider in relation to Milton in graphic literature. Useful and relevant comics to consider pertaining to the subject of the Miltonic devil in graphic literature include Garth Ennis's critically acclaimed *Preacher*, *Hellboy* by Mike Mignola and the *Hellblazer*-series (also known as *John Constantine*: *Hellblazer*) by various DC writers. Contemporary comics artists have also been inspired by other features of *Paradise Lost*, such as Milton's descriptions of Hell, Heaven and Earth.[30]Also, this thesis has touched upon the issue of Milton's views on obedience, authority and autonomy addressed in *Lucifer*, but it would be useful to examine whether and how other comics possibly tap into and expand these same issues and other subjects addressed in *Paradise Lost*, such as justice, moral heroism and gender hierarchy. An exploration of these particular depictions and issues that are inspired by and/or taken from Milton's *Paradise Lost* will provide a more inclusive and deeper understanding of Milton's presence in and influence on contemporary comics.

This deeper and broader insight into Miltonic subtexts present in contemporary graphic literature will make a valuable contribution to the study of Milton in popular culture in general, as it will illustrate whether and how contemporary comics shape, conform and divert from popular representations of Milton's Satan in other media associated with popular culture. Also, critical consideration of Milton in popular culture would add significantly to

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[29] Concerning Japanese comics one might expect that the Japanese tradition is little with Milton. In this light it is useful to note that at least one Japanese graphic adaptation of *Paradise Lost* created by Kasuke Maruo exists. Furthermore, many allusion to Milton's poem can be found in other Japanese comic books; notable examples include Tohru Fujisawa's comic aptly entitled "Paradise Lost," part of the Japanese comic series *Great Teacher Onizuko,* and *Shitsurakuen* (translation: 'paradise lost' or 'a lost paradise') by Tōru Naomura.
[30] Mignola's Hell, for example, in *Hellblazer* is "not far off from Milton's Hell in *Paradise Lost since [his]* Hell has Pandemonium, the capital city, right in the center and surrounded by a sea " (Mignola qtd. in Arrant).

studies concerned with Milton as it will allow for the detection of new, innovative interpretations and appropriations of Milton's poem. As Knoppers and Semenza put it, "[t]o neglect rewritings of Milton is to neglect . . . the importance of the books, music, film, and graphic arts that make him a vital, living part of today's culture" (16).

Appendix

Figure 1.1

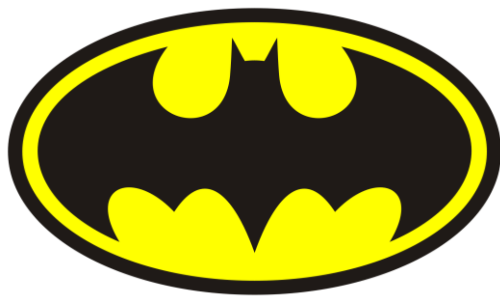


Figure 1.2 (Left: Batman's logo. Right: Satan's logo)

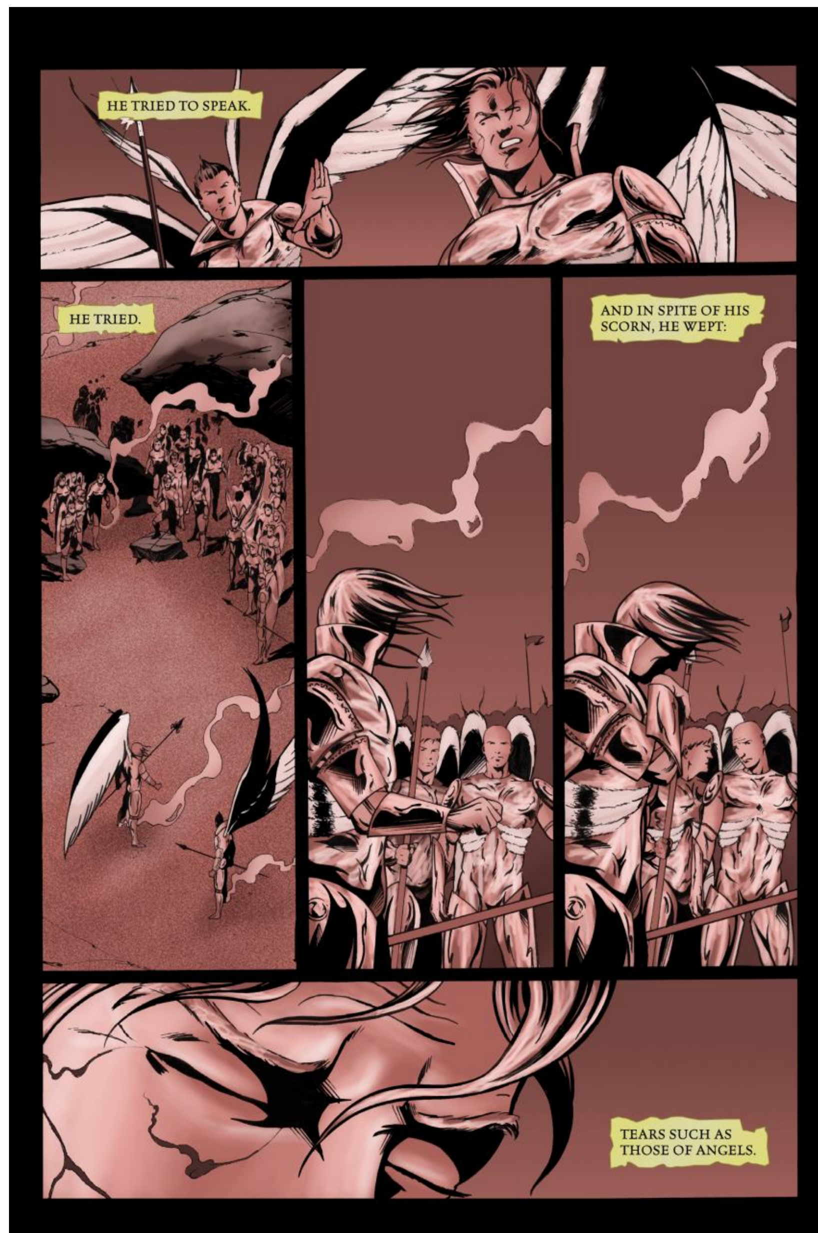


Figure 1.3

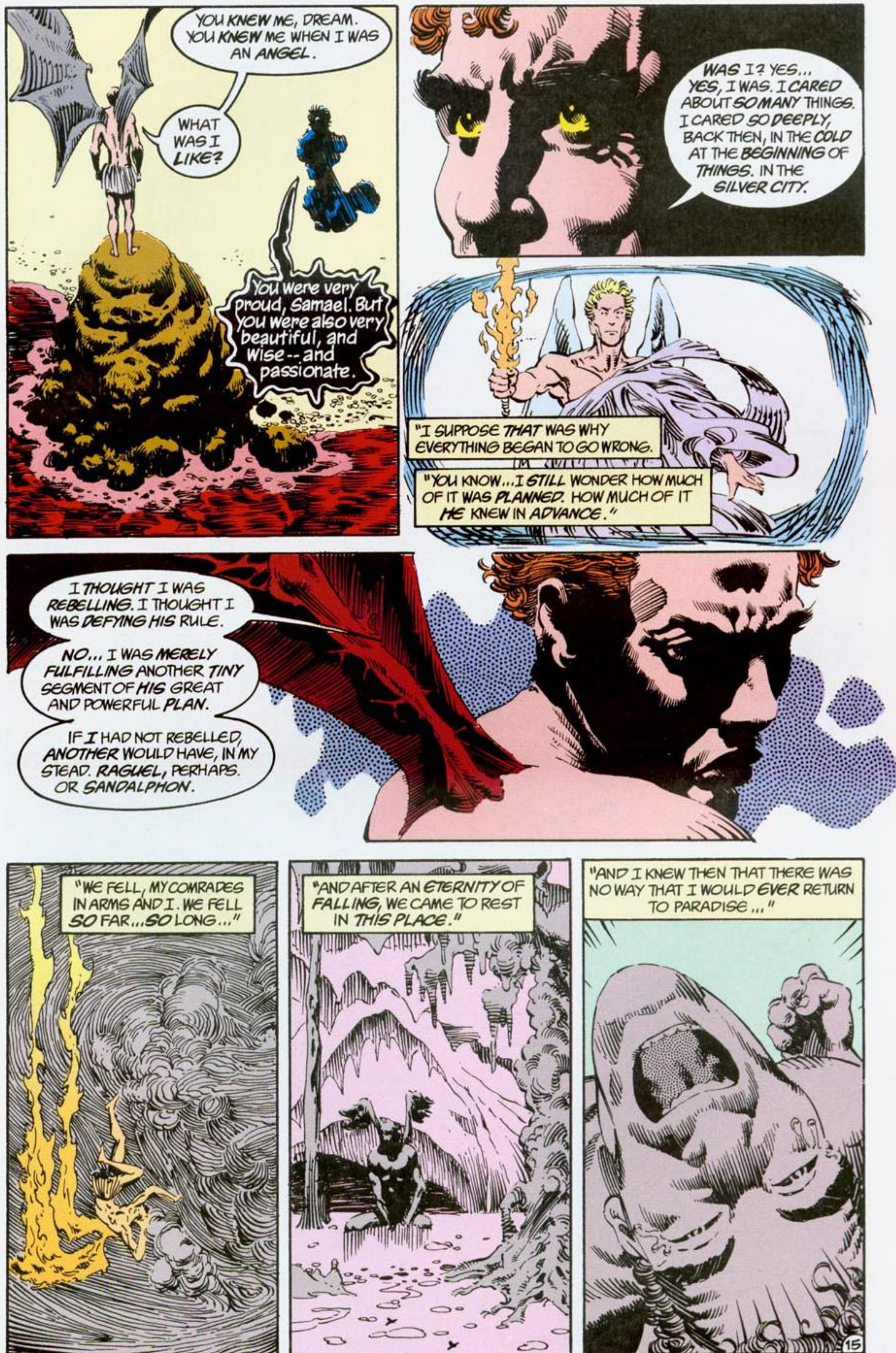
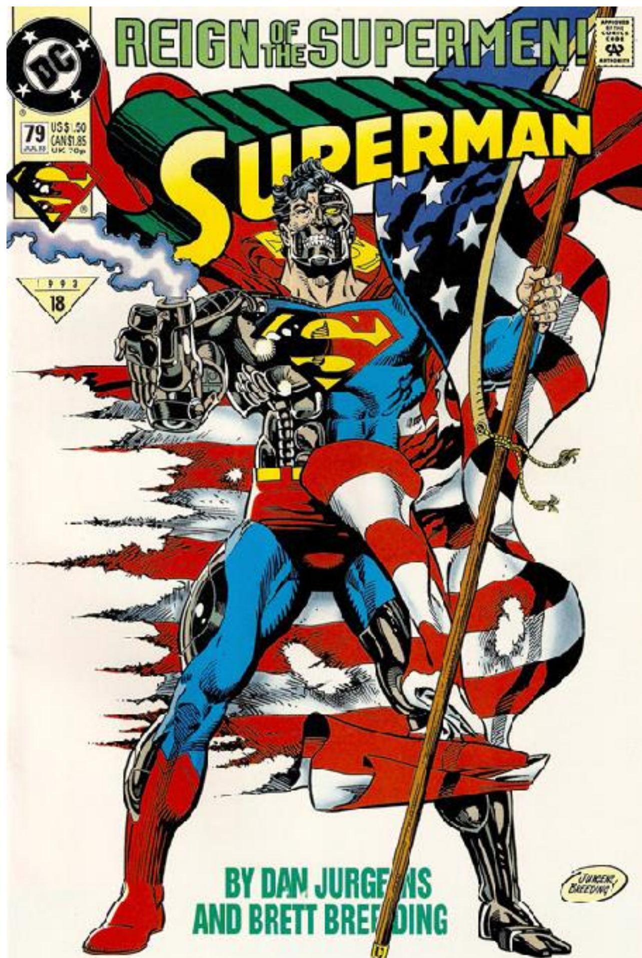


Figure 1.4

Figure 1.5



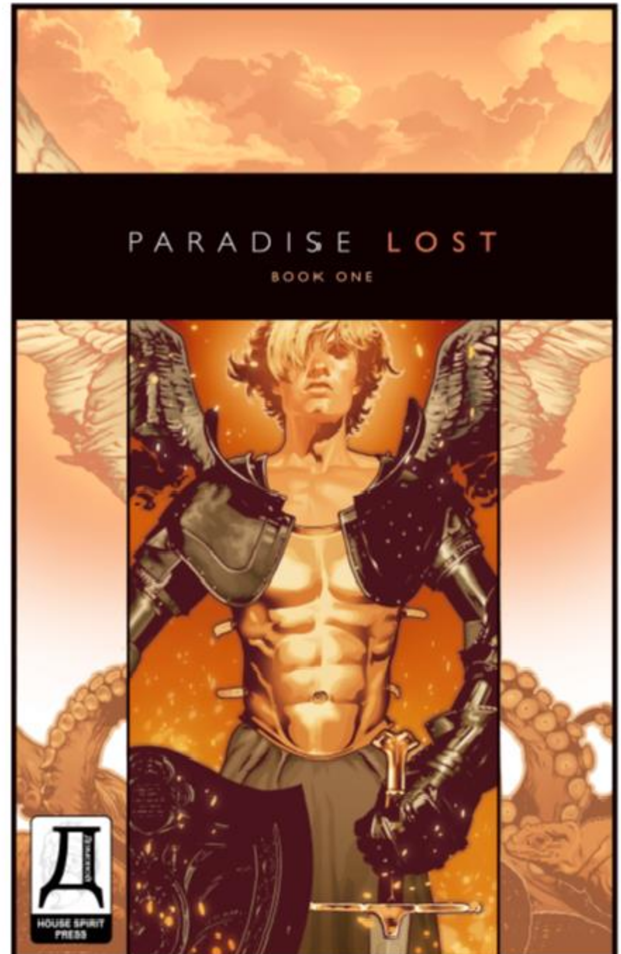


Figure 1.6 (Left: Cover of "Superman #79" by Dan Jurgens and Brett Breeding)
(Right: Cover of *Paradise Lost* by Steve Orlando)

Figure 1.7

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