‘Born to command and not to obey’:

Representations of Hierarchy in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*

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Introduction

This thesis examines the representation of hierarchy in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667/1674). Much scholarly attention has been devoted to Milton's representations of hierarchy within a specific context, such as his representation of gender hierarchies. However, throughout *Paradise Lost* and his prose works Milton is preoccupied with this theme of hierarchy in a range of different contexts. Moreover, Milton's representations of hierarchical structures are not always straightforward and seem to differ depending on the context. In addition to being represented in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's preoccupation with hierarchy is also apparent in several of his prose works, such as *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643) and *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649). In order to analyse this reoccurring theme, Milton's representations of hierarchy in *Paradise Lost* and the relevant prose works will be examined within three different contexts, namely politics, gender, and ecology.

John Milton's works challenge authority, as several of his prose works suggest that subjects should be allowed to depose an unjust king, for example. This type of argumentation seemingly suggests that Milton allows for hierarchical structures to be disrupted. Yet throughout his writing it becomes evident that Milton also emphasises the importance of respecting and maintaining hierarchies. For example, *Paradise Lost* frequently emphasises the importance of maintaining gender hierarchies in order for the relationship between husband and wife to be beneficial. Therefore, Milton's works seem to include a combination of views on maintaining hierarchies with his seemingly contradictory tendency to challenge authority. Overall, Milton's works show not only a preoccupation with hierarchical structures, but also an apparent ambivalence within Milton's representations of hierarchy.

As mentioned, much scholarly attention has been devoted to Milton's preoccupation with hierarchy, yet often within the scope of a specific context. For example, much of the

recent scholarly research devoted to Milton and hierarchy is interested in Milton's representation of gender hierarchies, as demonstrated by McGrath's analysis in "Formal Resistance: Gender Hierarchy and Eve's Final Speech in *Paradise Lost*". Other scholars have demonstrated hierarchies represented in other contexts, as in Gabel's examination of "Hierarchies of Vision in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*". Gabel points out that there is a hierarchy within the different perceptions through which the poem is told, with God being the superior perspective, followed by the (fallen) angels, which is followed by the human perspective (117). These perceiving agents form a hierarchical order, representing their proximity to divinity, which is emphasised by the passages pointing out the varying abilities of vision (118). Moreover, Blakemore demonstrates the existence of an architectural hierarchy in *Paradise Lost*, as the poem emphasises that all postlapsarian, human architecture is inferior to Hell's Pandemonium (142). It is thus evident that recent scholarly research demonstrates that Milton is interested in hierarchical structures in several different contexts.

Importantly, several articles that examine the representations of hierarchy point out the complexity and ambivalence of Milton's representations. Whereas some scholars reject the ambivalence and argue for the existence of a straightforward hierarchical structure, such as Hodgson's argument for Eve being consistently inferior to Adam, several scholars acknowledge a complexity (50). For example, Gabel's article concludes that Milton's hierarchy of perceiving agents is not straightforward, as Milton intertwines physical and spiritual vision, as well as representing a hierarchy that is not completely rigid (118). Accordingly, while demonstrating the manners in which Eve's final speech seems to contrast with her inferior position in the gender hierarchy that Milton represents, McGrath concludes that the results of his analysis merely add to the complexity of Milton's representation of gender hierarchies (83). Therefore, both Gabel's and McGrath's articles demonstrate the importance of acknowledging the complexity of Milton's representations of hierarchies.

These examples demonstrate that much scholarly attention has been devoted to Milton's preoccupation with hierarchy in a specific context. Moreover, several of these articles demonstrate that Milton's representation of the discussed hierarchical structure is not straightforward, and instead involves an ambivalence. Yet there seems to be a lack of scholarship Milton's representation of hierarchy more broadly, in which these representations are examined comparatively – which is what this thesis sets out to do. Several articles do examine issues that are of relevance to hierarchy in general, such as Milton's focus on obedience to one's superior. For example, Schoenfeldt's article "Obedience and Autonomy in *Paradise Lost*" examines what Milton understands as obedience and points out that Milton makes a distinction between the concepts of obedience and tyranny (379). According to Milton, obedience can only be referred to when there is the opportunity to use one's reason and then choose to obey to one's superior (Schoenfeldt 364). One is subjugated to a tyrannical hierarchy when one does not have this freedom to reason (Schoenfeldt 364). Schoenfeldt explores the concepts of obedience and tyranny in the context of disobedience to God, as well as the tension between obedience and autonomy visible in the relationship between Adam and Eve. This analysis thus draws relevant conclusions for Milton's more general treatment of hierarchy, as it shows the importance of Milton's sense of willing obedience in his representations of well-functioning hierarchies.

McColgan's article "Abundant Gifts: Hierarchy and Reciprocity in *Paradise Lost*" discusses the changes in scholarship on Milton's representation of gender hierarchies, making relevant arguments about the manner in which Milton's hierarchies should be analysed. McColgan points out that past scholarship focused on Milton's adherence to a rigid hierarchy and the manner in which Adam and Eve conform to stereotyped gender roles (75). Recently, however, scholars have increasingly challenged these views by proposing not only a dynamic type of hierarchy, but also pointing out the significance of the concept of reciprocity and how

this relates to the represented hierarchies (McColgan 75). McColgan concludes that in Milton's representation of gender hierarchies, there is a combination of reciprocity and hierarchy between husband and wife (77). According to McColgan, the hierarchy Milton represents is dynamic and thus not merely based on rank of creation, but also on self-development, which is dependent on the degree of reciprocity (76). As McColgan points out, to argue that Milton represents a consistent adherence to a rigid hierarchy is to ignore the significance of reciprocity and the complexity of Milton's representation (77). Even though this article is focused on gender hierarchies, it demonstrates the importance of acknowledging Milton's combination of hierarchy and reciprocity, and thus the complexity of Milton's general representations of hierarchies.

McColgan's emphasis on a dynamic hierarchy is another aspect that several scholars point out in their analyses. Because of the poem's emphasis on the importance of willing obedience, Durham argues that it is a hierarchy of merit rather than a hierarchy of rank that is of importance in *Paradise Lost* (15). With God as the divine superior, his subjects' order is not rigidly set according to rank but is instead subject to change as a result of obedience (Durham 15). The seeming tension between meritocracy and hierarchy is an issue that is explored by other scholars and in other contexts as well. Michals, for example, focuses on the seeming paradox of Eve's work in the Garden being both a means to progress towards a superior position in the hierarchy, as obedience will lead to ethereal progression, and an activity that emphasises her inferior position to God, as her inferiority demands obedience (499). There is thus an emphasis in recent scholarship on Milton's dynamic hierarchies, which is another aspect of Milton's hierarchical representation that adds to the complexity.

As this overview of recent scholarship demonstrates, many scholars have already focused on Milton's preoccupation with hierarchy. Yet there is a lack of scholarship devoted to comparing different representations of hierarchies in relation to each other. Therefore, this

thesis will examine Milton's representations of hierarchy in a number of different contexts, in order to attempt to draw conclusions about Milton's general use of hierarchical structures. In order to analyse this, it is important to take into consideration the conclusions made by recent scholarship about the complexity of Milton's understanding of hierarchy. In addition, Milton's combination of hierarchy and reciprocity is an important aspect that will be focused on throughout the analysis. By doing so, this thesis aims to add to a broader scholarly debate on Milton's complex understanding of the nature of hierarchy.

The first chapter discusses Milton's representation of hierarchical structures within his discussion of the nature of government. This representation will be analysed in *Paradise Lost* as well as political prose works, such as *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) and *Eikonoklastes* (1649*)*. One of the most prevalent hierarchical structures within this political context is the relation between the king and his subjects. On the one hand, Milton seems to adhere to the notion of a strict hierarchy where the subject should be obedient to political authority. Yet, Milton also proposes that it is the subject's right to oppose an authority who governs unjustly, such as a tyrannical king. Therefore, the first chapter will analyse Milton's seemingly contradictory stance on political hierarchies.

The second chapter examines Milton's representation of gender hierarchies in *Paradise Lost* and *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. As with Milton's discussion of political hierarchy, Milton's representation of gender hierarchies is ambivalent. On the one hand, Milton clearly confirms the idea of male superiority, to which the woman should conform. On the other hand, Milton does not fully adhere to this traditional gender hierarchy, as there are suggestions of this hierarchy being inverted as well. Additionally, Milton emphasises a sense of mutuality between man and woman that would contradict a hierarchical relationship, as it suggests a type of equality.

The third chapter focuses on Milton's representation of the hierarchical relation between human beings and their natural environment in *Paradise Lost.* Milton represents this relationship as a hierarchical structure, as man has rightfully obtained dominion, and thus authority, over nature. Yet the relationship depicted seems to be more harmonious than hierarchical, as the relationship is mutually beneficial. After the Fall, however, this harmonious relationship ceases to exist and nature is no longer obedient to Adam and Eve.

By examining Milton's concepts of hierarchy in these three different contexts, this thesis aims to examine not only Milton's preoccupation with hierarchical structures, but also the apparent diversity in Milton's representations of hierarchy. In addition, this thesis aims to analyse any possible aspects in Milton's representations that are of importance in all three of the contexts. Through this analysis, this thesis will attempt to shed more light on Milton's overall preoccupation with the theme of hierarchy.

Chapter 1: Political Hierarchy: Monarchical Authority and Church Government

Within Milton's discussion of various political issues his engagement with hierarchical systems is evident. Some of the most prevalent political issues of seventeenth-century England that are related to hierarchical authority are monarchy and church government. Milton's seemingly conflicting ideas on hierarchy are apparent in his views on monarchical authority and the episcopal policy, which are presented in his prose works as well as in *Paradise Lost*. Accordingly, this chapter aims to examine in what manner Milton utilises the concept of hierarchy in his political argumentation in order to defend the right to resist authority, as well as to emphasise the importance of obedience to one's superior.

First of all, Milton utilises the concept of hierarchy to criticise the monarch's rule, as he calls into question the validity of the monarch's authoritative position. Milton believes that only someone who is naturally superior is worthy of being a leader and obtaining authority over others. According to Milton, the manner in which a monarch obtains their power, namely hereditary succession, hinders the possibility of a country solely obtaining rightful rulers as he emphasises "the danger and inconveniences of committing arbitrary power to any" (*TKM* 149). Therefore, due to hereditary succession it is left to chance whether a monarch is worthy of their position or not: "it behooves not a wise nation to commit the sum of their well-being, the whole state of their safety, to fortune" (*The Ready and Easy Way* 380). In fact, it is dangerous for a country to be governed by a single person who is not chosen for their superiority in leadership, as "the temptation of such a power" is likely to result in "injustice and partiality" (*TKM* 149). Therefore, the manner in which a country's governing authority is chosen should be altered in order to encourage the possibility of a beneficial leadership.

In addition, Milton criticises the manner in which the monarchical authority falsely claims personal superiority in order to sustain his authority. Absolute monarchs, such as

Charles I, tend to rely on the concepts of divine right and sovereign immunity as a justification for their actions. According to Milton, no man should have the right to claim divine authority, and the adherence to sovereign immunity hinders the possibility of a monarch serving the benefit of the country. Milton explains that the people "have not more seriously considered kings than in the gaudy name of majesty, and admire them and their doings as if they breathed not the same breath with other mortal men" (*Eikonoklastes* 308). Yet, no person should be able to "arrogate so unreasonably above human condition" (*TKM* 151). Milton thus strongly criticises the monarchical hierarchy by emphasising that the monarch is not divine but human, and that the monarch should not claim to have superior qualities than his subjects as that is not the reason for his superior rank. Therefore, Milton aims to alter the concept of monarchical authority by emphasising the importance of the quality of leadership (Oldman 295).

Additionally, Milton criticises the hierarchy that exists between the monarch and his subjects for its lack of reciprocity. In addition to the subjects serving the monarch, the monarch should serve his subjects in return. For example, Milton utilises Aristotle's definition to argue that a king should be someone who "governs to the good and profit of his people, and not for his own ends" (*TKM* 150). When such a reciprocity is not the case obedience to monarchical authority is "inclinable to slavery" (*TKM* 150). According to Milton, a rightful monarch should serve his subjects, not just himself and God, as that is what the monarch vows to do during his coronation. Accordingly, "to say Kings are accountable to none but God, is the overturning of all Law and government" (*TKM* 150). Therefore, Milton argues that a superior, authoritative position should involve responsibility and accountability towards the inferior ranks.

Moreover, Milton links obedience to the monarch to servitude - whether the monarch is tyrannical or not. Dzelzainis argues that Milton's argumentation is influenced by the neo-

Roman theory of liberty, which suggests that freedom can only be possible without prohibitions, as any type of constraint or dependency will limit one's natural behaviours, thus making one a slave ("Republicanism" 302-304). Therefore, the mere possibility of being oppressed by coercion is sufficient to be considered servitude (Dzelzainis, "Republicanism" 307). Accordingly, Milton attacks Charles I for his inaccurate definition of liberty, as *Eikon Basilike* describes the subject's liberty as the freedom to enjoy the "fruits of our industry" and the benefits of the laws, without interference (*Eikonoklastes* 476). Yet, *Eikonoklastes* (1649) shows that the absence of interference is not what Milton considers to be liberty, as freedom is not possible when subjected to another's discretionary power: "We expect therefore something more, that must distinguish free Government from slavish" (Dzelzainis, "Milton's Politics" 81; *Eikonoklastes* 477). Milton emphasises that the current monarchical hierarchy leaves no opportunity for rational freedom, thus oppressing the subjects into servitude.

Importantly, it is not obedience to authority that Milton is against, as he does express that it is "needful to ordain some authority" in order to ensure "peace and common right" (*TKM* 148). Accordingly, in *The Ready and Easy Way* Milton does admit that it is possible for a monarch to ascend the throne who rules for the benefit of the people and is thus worthy of his leadership: "I deny not but that there may be such a king who may regard the common good before his own, may have no vicious favorite, may hearken only to the wisest and incorruptest of his parliament" (The Ready and Easy Way 380). Additionally, his earlier prose work *Of Reformation* (1641) contains an approval of a mixed, constitutional monarchy "where, under a free and untutored monarch, the noblest, worthiest, and most prudent men, with full approbation and suffrage of the people, have in their power the supreme, and final determination of highest affairs" (77). These views emphasise that Milton is not against political hierarchy in general, but it is the dangers of monarchical authority in particular that Milton warns against, as it can result in tyranny and servitude.

In addition to criticising the authority of the monarch, Milton argues that people should have the right to oppose a monarch: “No man who knows aught can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free … and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey” (*TKM* 148). Milton thus emphasises the oppressive nature of monarchy, as the subjects are obliged to obey without having any opportunity for self-determination. According to Milton, as a king is primarily supposed to function for the benefit of his people, it follows that people should have the right to determine for themselves who they are governed by. Therefore, whereas traditional theories of the social contract suggest that the subjects should submit to the person of authority, who is supposed to protect the subjects’ rights in return, Milton reconstructs this concept by arguing for the allowance of resistance (Rumrich 143). Therefore, Milton argues that instead of being forced to accept and obey commands of the monarch, the subjects should have the right to make commands about their authority. Therefore, he seems to argue for a more mutual relationship between the differing ranks, where the subjects have the right to make commands about their authority, and the authority serves the subjects.

Importantly, Milton is inconsistent in his discussion of the extent to which self-determination should be a possibility (Fallon 6). On the one hand, Milton emphasises the dangers of the possible tyrannical aspects of monarchy, arguing that tyrannical behaviour is thus a valid justification for deposition. Yet, on the other hand, Milton proposes a seemingly incompatible political model in which deposition is always legitimate, whether the monarch expresses tyrannical behaviour or not: “though no tyrant, merely by the liberty and right of free-born men to be governed as seems to them best” (Fallon 6; *TKM* 152). This is an important inconsistency to take into account when considering Milton’s opposition to monarchical governance, as it calls into question the degree of radicalism concerning Milton’s rejection of monarchical authority. Milton is also inconsistent in his exploration of the

Calvinist theory of resistance, which discusses who is qualified to resist a tyrant (Dzelzainis, "Milton's Politics" 79). Traditionally, only inferior magistrates would be allowed to resist a ruler's descendancy into tyranny (Dzelzainis, "Milton's Politics" 79). Yet, the first edition of *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* includes Milton's argument for a more general rightfulness of opposition by supporting the lawfulness of private persons enforcing justice upon a monarch (Fallon 2). The edition published later that year, however, seems to diminish its degree of radicalism by proposing that a tyrant can only lawfully be opposed by inferior magistrates, or Parliament (Fallon 3). Despite these inconsistencies, it is evident from Milton's overall argumentation that he argues for the people's right to self-determination, which is "the root and source of all liberty, to dispose and economize in the land which God hath given them" (*TKM* 168).

In addition to Milton's opposition to monarchical authority, he also challenged the authority of church government in his antiprelatical tracts. As a Puritan, Milton was dissatisfied with the policies of the Church of England, believing that the process of Protestant reformation had halted, and opposing the policies of William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Keeble 124; Wheeler 265). The Puritans aimed to further reform the Church of England by restoring faith to what they saw as the pure and simple practices of Christianity. Therefore, they rejected the unnecessary extravagance of traditional customs that they believed to be remnants of Catholic influence, such as ceremonial practices and episcopal orders. An episcopal polity is a hierarchical form of church government with the bishops as the chief authorities (Rumrich 146). Milton criticises the validity of the authoritative position of the bishops, as he argues that there is no biblical evidence to justify their authority (Smith, "The Anti-Episcopal Tracts" 155).

Accordingly, Milton is often regarded as siding with the Presbyterians who challenged the episcopal type of church government, seeing the power of the prelates as unjust and a type

of government modelled on that of the Roman church (Keeble 124). According to Milton, the church has become corrupted as a result of the episcopal hierarchy, as the church is governed by bishops whose main interest is the acquisition of their powerful position (Smith, "The Anti-Episcopal Tracts" 158). Therefore, in a similar manner to Milton's warnings against the dangers of concentrated political power concerning monarchical government, Milton aimed for a church government that is less centralised and thus more representative than the episcopal "tyranny [that] had invaded the church" (Rumrich 146; *The Reason of Church Government* 92). In 1640, the Root and Branch Petition was accepted by the Long Parliament, which required the abolition of bishops and the impeachment of William Laud (Wheeler 265). In 1644, the Westminster Assembly of Divines, a council of theologians and members of Parliament, gathered with the purpose of restructuring the Church of England. The majority of the Assembly favoured a Presbyterian form of church government, in which the church would be governed by elected assemblies of elders whilst still implementing a hierarchical government and a uniformity of practice (Keeble 126). Yet, the Puritan group of Independents, or congregationalists, opposed any type of centralised imposition and aimed for each congregation to be autonomous, led by democratically elected ministers (Rumrich 146).

Within his anti-episcopal tracts, Milton never explicitly sides with the Presbyterians, nor does he propose an alternative church polity (Keeble 128). Instead, Milton is mostly preoccupied with the corruptness and tyrannical power that the episcopal church demonstrates, as well as aiming to alter not only the church but also the manner in which the individual comprehends and practices religion (Wheeler 266). Therefore, Milton seems to be in favour of congregationalism, as he desired an increase of religious toleration that would make individual interpretation of scripture possible, as well as encouraging the engagement of an individual's will and reason (Rumrich 150; Smith, "The Anti-Episcopal Tracts" 157). Therefore, in line with the argumentation of much of his writings, Milton aimed for the

individual's conscience not be submitted to ecclesiastical power (Keeble 126). Accordingly, he argues in *Areopagitica* for the rational freedom to restore religious truth: "To be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it" (131). In order to be able to find religious truth autonomy is necessary, as episcopacy as well as Presbyterianism "neglect and permit not others to unite those dissevered pieces which are yet wanting to the body of truth" (*Areopagitica* 131). Therefore, the truth can be found "could we but forego this prelatical tradition of crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of men" (*Areopagitica* 133). Overall, it is evident from Milton's stance concerning church government that he criticises the validity of the bishop's position, as well as arguing for the individual autonomy to seek religious truth instead of being forced to obey to a uniform practice of religion.

Political Hierarchy in *Paradise Lost*

When considering political hierarchy in *Paradise Lost* it is evident that Milton largely explores the issue of obedience to authority, as well as emphasising the importance of rational freedom. Overall, Milton's representation of disobedience in the poem can serve as an explanation of Milton's seemingly contradictory combination of arguments. In order to analyse this, Satan's character is valuable to explore as his disobedience is a prominent aspect of the poem. Satan's rebellion against God is ostensibly justified by his antimonarchical arguments of opposing tyranny and thus defending individual liberty. Therefore, Satan's arguments seem to be in line with the basic argumentation of classical republicanism, which argues that the liberty of the individual should not be dependent on the permission of those in power (Chernaik 125). Additionally, Satan seemingly attempts to promote a Hell that is democratic and free, as opposed to the tyranny and servitude that occurs in Heaven: "Free, and to none accountable, preferring / Hard liberty before the easy yoke / Of servile pomp."

(II.255-257). Therefore, Satan's argumentation seems to be in line with Milton's justification of resisting monarchical governance when tyrannical.

Yet, it is evident that Satan's political values are severely contradictory, which is illustrated by his proclamation that it is "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n" (I.263). Accordingly, Satan's own actions reflect the tyrannical behaviour he accuses God of, and Hell includes the hierarchical inequality that he opposed in Heaven. Importantly, Satan's argumentation is invalid, as he refuses to acknowledge God's divinity and superiority, regarding God's rule as the "the tyranny of Heav'n", where his adherents must "bow and sue for grace / With suppliant knee, and deify his power" (I.124; I.111-112). The mistake Satan makes when considering God as a tyrant is conflating earthly politics with the divine, a conflation that is reminiscent of the absolutist monarchs that ruled England. Therefore, what Satan would refer to as servitude is not in accordance with what the angels consider to be servitude. Abdiel, for example, explains his different interpretation: "Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name / Of servitude to serve whom God ordains" (VI.174-175). Instead, "This is servitude, / To serve th'unwise, or him who hath rebelled / Against his worthier" (VI. 178-180). Accordingly, obeying authority is not alike to servitude "When he who rules is worthiest, and excels / Them whom he governs" (VI.177-178). Therefore, Abdiel explains that it is not the obedience itself that is harmful when the authority is rightful.

Yet, Satan mistakes obedience to God for tyranny, which are two different notions that Milton attempts to distinguish. Whereas true obedience may seem to hinder the possibility of individual rationality, Milton utilises Satan's disobedience as well as the Fall to illustrate that obedience does not relate to a limitation of one's psychological autonomy, or self-determination (Schoenfeldt 363). Rather, Milton argues that obedience demands the engagement of one's rationality, as one needs to employ reason to discover the truth of whom you are supposed to obey (Schoenfeldt 364). Therefore, by associating obedience with

psychological autonomy Milton "generates a revolutionary morality and politics out of the potentially conservative virtue of obedience" (Schoenfeldt 364). Yet, when obedience to authority is forced it ceases to be true obedience as one does not have the freedom to utilise reason, which makes it tyranny instead. In addition, Milton emphasises the dangers of blind obedience, as even when obedience is not forced it is essential for the individual to utilise reason, as he explains in *Areopagitica*: "A man may be a heretic in the truth … if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds, becomes his heresy" (127).

Accordingly, God allows for the existence of free will in order to establish whether his adherents' faith is true or not: "Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere / Of true allegiance, constant faith or love" (III.103-104). Milton's frequent emphasis on the existence of free will throughout the poem is an important aspect when considering obedience to authority, as free will is necessary for Milton's relation between willing obedience and rational freedom to be able to exist. Whereas the free will theology was accepted among some of the Puritan groups as well as the adherents of Laudianism, the predestination theology had mostly been the orthodox standard of the Church of England since the sixteenth century (Smith, "*Paradise Lost* and Heresy" 523). Yet, Satan's rebellion exemplifies Milton's rejection of predestination. Whereas some of the devils do "complain that Fate / Free virtue should enthrall to Force or Chance", God explains that "they themselves decreed / Their own revolt, not I" (II.550-551; III.116-125). Therefore, while Satan had free will he deviated from right reason, which caused his disobedience (Smith, "*Paradise Lost* and Heresy" 523).

Accordingly, the importance of utilising right reason in order to conduct true obedience is exemplified by Satan's character. Satan shows several instances of self-reflection and regret, recognising the goodness of God and finally acknowledging that God is his creator, and thus recognising the severity of his rebellion: "Hadst thou the same free will and

power to stand? / Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to accuse, / But Heav'ns free love dealt equally to all?" (IV.66-68) .Yet, Satan's ultimate inability to rationalise towards virtuous actions and obedience, as well as not choosing the path of redemption as Adam and Eve do, means that Hell is not just a physical place to which he is abandoned, but a tormenting mental experience: "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (IV.75-77). Because of Satan's choice to seek "Evil to others" instead of seeking redemption, it means that "the will / And high permission of all-ruling Heaven / Left him at large to his own dark designs, / That with reiterated crimes he might / Heap on himself damnation" (I.211-215). Milton thus argues that Satan no longer has the freedom to choose redemption and find salvation, as part of God's punishment (Chernaik 136). Accordingly, the importance of utilising right reason is further emphasised by Adam, when he explains to Eve to be cautious with reason "Lest by some fair appearing good surprised / She dictate false, and misinform the will / To do what God expressly hath forbid" (IX.354-356).

Accordingly, Milton's representation of the Fall illustrates that obedience has become more difficult in the postlapsarian world as the ability to utilise right reason has been diminished. Michael explains to Adam that since their disobedience, man's reason has been obscured: "Since thy original lapse, true liberty / Is lost, which always with right reason dwells" (XII.83-84). As a result of the Fall, "inordinate desires / And upstart passions catch the government / From reason" (XII.86-90). Therefore, in the postlapsarian world humans suffer from passions that diminish their ability to reason. Additionally, the object of postlapsarian obedience has become more complicated. Whereas prelapsarian obedience constitutes the adherence to a single prohibition, postlapsarian obedience constitutes the adherence to whatever conduct the engagement of right reason determines (Schoenfeldt 363-364). Yet, whereas the object of obedience has become more complicated to determine after the Fall, prelapsarian free choice is represented as problematic as well, accompanying a great

deal of uncertainty (Chernaik 134). Therefore, the Fall does not constitute a simple change from formal obedience to God's command to self-determination (Schoenfeldt 364). Free choice and willing obedience are of importance in both the prelapsarian and the postlapsarian world. As Milton clarifies in *Areopagitica*: "Many there be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing" (117).

Because of the poem's insistence on the importance of willing obedience, Durham argues that it is a hierarchy of merit rather than a hierarchy of rank that is of importance in *Paradise Lost* (15). For example, God explains the Son's position as being the result of his worthiness, as he "hast been found / By merit more than birthright Son of God, / Found worthiest to be so by being good, / Far more than great or high" (III. 308-311). Additionally, God explains that humans live on Earth "till by degrees of merit raised / They open to themselves at length the way / Up hither, under long obedience tried" (VII.157-160). As a result, whilst God remains the ultimate leader of the divine hierarchy, his subjects' order is not rigidly set according to rank but is instead subject to change based on obedience and the adherence to virtue (Durham 15). Milton seems to be an adherent of monism, or animist materialism, the belief that everything in the universe is of one substance, meaning that there is no division between the material and immaterial, or bodies and souls (Smith, "*Paradise Lost* and Heresy" 515). Accordingly, Raphael explains to Adam that "time may come when men / With angels may participate" as their "bodies may at last turn all to spirit" in order to ascend to heaven, "If ye be found obedient" (V.493-501). Yet, the opportunity for an ethereal progression is hindered by the act of disobedience.

Milton's overall warning of postlapsarian tyranny, which is also a consequence of man's disobedience, and its resulting limitation of one's rational liberty is explored explicitly in Book XII. As mentioned before, the angel Michael explains to Adam that as a result of the

Fall passions have hindered the utilisation of reason and "to servitude reduce / Man till then free" (XII. 89-90). He tells Adam the story of Nimrod, who "from Heav'n claiming second sov'reignty" will "tyrannize" and "arrogate dominion undeserved / Over his brethren" (XII.35; 39; 27-28). He even attempts to challenge God by constructing the Tower of Babel in order to reach Heaven, for which he is punished by the introduction of languages which leads to miscommunication. Because of his tyrannical behaviour Nimrod is "affecting to subdue / Rational liberty", which means that "true liberty / Is lost" (XII.81-82; 83-84). Therefore, Adam is instructed on the importance of rational liberty, and he expresses his disapproval that someone would claim "Authority usurped, from God not giv'n" (XII.66). Adam explains about God's creation that "man over men / He made not lord; such title to himself / Reserving, human left from human free" (XII.69-71). Milton thus suggests that a monarch is not a rightful ruler, whereas God is.

Overall, it is evident from Milton's prose works as well as *Paradise Lost* that hierarchical systems and especially the related issue of obedience to authority are prominently discussed. Especially the importance of rightful authority is emphasised, as Milton dedicates several of his prose works to explaining why he believes the monarchy, and especially the reign of Charles I, to be an unjust form of government. A monarch falsely claims divine right, is not elected by the people he is supposed to serve, and the institution of a monarchy can thus lead to tyranny. His warning of the conscience being oppressed by unjust authority is also apparent in his rejection of the episcopal form of church government. In order to establish what rightful authority to obey it is necessary that a person's psychological autonomy is not limited. When one's obedience is forced instead, one is subjugated to tyranny. Therefore, whereas willing obedience is important when it concerns rightful authority, such as God, Milton believes that one should have the right to resist authority when it is unjust or tyrannical by utilising "the gift of reason to be his own chooser" (*Areopagitica* 110).

Chapter 2: Gender Hierarchy in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *Paradise Lost*

Issues of gender offer another context in which Milton's preoccupation with hierarchy is evident. The topic is largely discussed in his four tracts on marriage and divorce, while Milton also examines it through the relationship between Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Milton's representation of gender seems ambivalent throughout these texts. Whereas he argues for a mutuality that suggests a type of equality, he also depicts strict adherence to a gender hierarchy, yet not without deviating from the limitations a gender hierarchy would require. Therefore, this chapter will analyse Milton's complex representation of gender, whilst taking the importance of hierarchy into consideration

Milton's prose work *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), the first of the divorce tracts, seems contradictory in its argument about gender hierarchy. Considering Milton's personal marital problems with his first wife Mary Powell and the strict regulations surrounding divorce, it is not unsurprising that marriage and divorce were issues of importance for Milton. In seventeenth-century England marriage was perceived as a sacrament, which meant that the union was practically indissoluble (Foyster 5). Additionally, a legal separation was only allowed in cases of adultery and cruelty (Patterson 280). As Foyster points out, "legal divorce was a lengthy and costly procedure which discriminated against women, and informal separations or desertions were socially frowned upon and often economically disadvantageous" (5). Therefore, according to Patterson, Milton utilises his tract to emphasise "what was wrong with a legal system that encouraged hypocrisy, stressed the dynastic and physical aspects of marriage over the psychological and sociable, and did not allow for second chances" (282).

Accordingly, Milton attempts to redefine the concept of marriage by explaining what he sees as the true purpose of marriage. Whereas canon law prioritised the physical aspects of

a marriage, emphasising the importance of procreation, Milton prioritises the emotional aspects of a marital union: "marriage was not ordained only for copulation" but instead the purpose of marriage is the "prevention of loneliness to the mind and spirit of man" (*DDD* 153; *DDD* 119). According to Milton, an emotional compatibility within marriage is the only manner to avoid loneliness: "loneliness of the soul cannot lay itself down by the side of such a meet and acceptable union as God ordained in marriage" (*DDD* 123-124). Therefore, Milton argues, if this purpose is not achieved, it should be possible to separate, as being forced to remain in an emotionally incompatible marriage will make both partners' lives miserable: "that through their different tempers, thoughts, and constitutions, they can neither be to one another a remedy against loneliness, nor live in any union or contentment all their days" (*DDD* 114). Therefore, Milton defends a no-fault divorce, in which it is not required to prove anyone's personal fault if a marriage does not succeed, arguing instead that marriage is an emotional union and that incompatibility should thus be a valid reason for separation.

Within his argumentation, Milton's preoccupation with hierarchy becomes apparent as he focuses on the relation between genders. First of all, Milton's argumentation seems to suggest a non-hierarchical relation between husband and wife as he emphasises the importance of mutuality. For example, his argument that "the dignity and blessing of marriage is placed rather in the mutual enjoyment of that which the wanting soul needfully seeks" seems to promote a mutual happiness within marriage for both husband and wife (*DDD* 123). Accordingly, "Love in marriage cannot live nor subsist unless it be mutual" (*DDD* 126). Therefore, remaining in an unhappy marriage hinders the couple's mutual happiness: "their continuing to be man and wife is against the glory of God and their mutual happiness" (*DDD* 133). The fact that Milton argues repeatedly that successful marriage is based on mutual love and happiness seemingly argues for an equality in contentment between husband and wife. Moreover, the full title of the tract states that marriage and divorce should be "Restored to the

good of both sexes" (*DDD* 113), thus adding to the sense of gender equality that Milton's emphasis on mutuality might suggest.

However, whereas Milton's emphasis on mutuality may seem to suggest a type of non-hierarchical relation between husband and wife, the tract's argumentation demonstrates that Milton's concept of mutuality does not necessarily imply equality. Instead, according to Milton, the mutual contentment that a marriage should be based on involves the wife being content to make her husband content. Accordingly, the mutuality Milton advocates in his divorce tracts is based on male superiority. For example, the advantages of a marriage are mainly to relieve the male partner's loneliness: "apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman, to comfort and refresh him against the evil of solitary life" (*DDD* 114). Accordingly, this is the reason that the first woman was created, as Milton illustrates by using Genesis's account of Eve's creation: "It is not good, saith he, that man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet for him" (*DDD* 119). Therefore, a wife's purpose is to serve her husband's emotional needs: "she who naturally and perpetually is no meet help, can be no wife" (*DDD* 144). It is thus evident that Milton's concept of mutuality in marriage is confined to the limitations of the traditional gender hierarchy, which emphasises male superiority.

Accordingly, it is mainly the right of the man to divorce his wife that is of importance in Milton's tract: "But yet to say divorce was granted for relief of wives, rather than of husbands is but weakly conjectured" (*DDD* 149). As marriage is mainly supposed to benefit the husband, it is more lamentable for the husband when a marriage fails than it is for his wife: "is it not most likely that God in his Law had more pity towards man thus wedlocked than towards the woman that was created for another?" (*DDD* 150). Moreover, as a woman's purpose is to benefit her husband, Milton focuses on the woman's blame in a marriage that does not achieve its purpose, and dismisses any arguments that promote women's rights in marriage and divorce:

> Palpably uxorious! Who can be ignorant that woman was created for man, and not man for woman; and that a husband may be injured as insufferably in marriage as a wife. What an injury is it after wedlock not to be beloved, what to be slighted, what to be contended with in point of house-rule who shall be the head, not for any parity of wisdom (for that were something reasonable) but out of a female pride? (*DDD* 149)

Importantly, Milton explicitly focuses here on the authority a man should have over his wife and that this authority should not be challenged, which he explains further by drawing upon St. Paul's argument: ""I suffer not," saith St. Paul, "the woman to usurp authority over the man." If the apostle could not suffer it, into what mould is he mortified that can?" (*DDD* 149). Therefore, Milton's adherence to a rigid hierarchy is thus evident in his discussion of marriage and divorce, as he emphasises male authority and prioritises the man's emotional needs.

Overall, it is evident that Milton's argumentation concerning marriage and divorce is largely preoccupied with hierarchy. On the one hand, Milton's discussions of mutuality within marriage could indicate a concern for both the husband's and the wife's happiness, thus suggesting a non-hierarchical stance. However, instead of advocating equality, Milton's concept of mutuality coexists with a gender hierarchy. Accordingly, the purpose of the woman's creation is to be the man's partner, and relieve him from his loneliness. Milton's focus on male superiority and rightful authority over his wife thus illustrates that his overall argumentation adheres to the traditional gender hierarchy.

Gender Hierarchy in *Paradise Lost*

Milton's interest in issues of gender hierarchy is also apparent in Adam and Eve's relationship in *Paradise Lost*. Throughout the seventeenth century, the extent to which the traditional gender hierarchy should be conformed to was a prominent issue that was frequently discussed

in literature. Accordingly, 'the woman question' led to heated debates in pamphlets surrounding the issue, and interpretations of the biblical narrative of the creation were frequently utilised in order to support one's argument concerning the societal role of women (Polydorou 24). Wiseman points out that these different interpretations would have been known to the majority of seventeenth-century readers of *Paradise Lost*, which would thus suggest that for contemporary readers Milton's interpretation of Eve had implications concerning women's status in the social hierarchy (540). Yet, when examining Milton's representation of gender in *Paradise Lost* it is evident that his depiction of the relation between genders is not straightforward. On the one hand, there is a representation of mutuality, but the poem also frequently includes language of hierarchy, establishing Adam as Eve's superior. At the same time, the poem contains various moments at which Eve seems to deviate from the limitations that her inferior rank would require, thus possibly suggesting an inversion of the hierarchy. Therefore, the concluding part of this chapter will examine the seemingly ambivalent manner in which Milton utilises hierarchy concerning the issue of gender throughout *Paradise Lost.*

First of all, the emotional compatibility and mutual happiness that Milton argues for in his divorce tracts is also apparent in the relationship between Adam and Eve. Throughout Book IV, for example, the conversations that the couple engages in are an important aspect of their relationship, and they both evidently express gratitude and love towards each other. Adam addresses Eve as his "Sole partner and sole part of all these joys, / Dearer thyself than all" (IV.411-412). In her response, Eve expresses similar gratitude for having Adam as her partner, as she says they "owe … daily thanks" to God for their companionship (IV.444-445). Later in the poem, Adam explains to Raphael the reason for his affection for Eve: "Those thousand decencies that daily flow / From all her words and actions, … which declare unfeigned / Union of mind, or in us both one soul" (VIII.601-604). The fact that Adam

declares his gratitude for having a “union of mind” and “one soul” between them emphasises the importance of emotional compatibility and mutuality, in a manner that is reminiscent of Milton’s divorce tract (VIII.604).

Yet, as was apparent in the divorce tracts, Milton’s concept of mutuality is not based on gender equality. While there are suggestions of equality throughout the poem, language of equality is frequently combined with language of hierarchy. This is apparent, for example, in Satan’s introduction to Adam and Eve in Book IV. On the one hand, Satan describes their creation as being equal as he views them both as seeming “Godlike”: “in their looks divine / The image of their glorious maker shone” (IV.289; IV.291-292). On the other hand, Satan perceives an evident inequality between Adam and Eve:

> though both
> Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
> For contemplation he and valour formed,
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace,
> He for God only, she for God in him. (IV.295-299)

Whereas Adam’s appearance “declared / Absolute rule”, Eve’s appearance “implied / Subjection” (IV.300-301; IV.307-308). Therefore, the initial description of Adam and Eve includes a seeming ambivalence concerning the issue of gender, as Satan describes an equal creation as well as an appearance of male superiority.

Yet, the fact that this description is proposed by Satan’s character calls into question the reliability of his perspective on Adam and Eve. Accordingly, his description of inequality is based on appearance and is described by using words such as ‘seemed’ and ‘implied’, which increases the sense of unreliability (IV.296; IV.307; Wiseman 541). Yet, Miller argues that Satan’s combination of equality and hierarchy is an aspect that runs throughout the poem, and might be a possible result of Milton’s attempt to fuse two contradictory passages in

Genesis (153). On the one hand, Genesis 1.27 suggests an equality in creation: “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (*King James Bible*, Gen. 1.27). Chapter two of Genesis, on the other hand, emphasises Eve’s secondary creation: “And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen. 2.22). Additionally, the purpose of Eve’s existence is explained: “*It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2.18). Therefore, Satan’s seeming ambivalence towards gender seems to be in accordance with the contradicting representation in Genesis, and this ambivalence returns throughout the poem (Miller 153).

For example, the conversation between Adam and Eve in Book IV also includes a combination of expressions of equality and adherence to hierarchy. As mentioned before, Adam addresses Eve as his “sole partner” with whom he can equally share his experience of living in Eden by working together as companions: “were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet” (IV.439). Accordingly, in his first speech to Eve, Adam does not include any sense of inequality, as is emphasised by his manner of describing that God “raised us from the dust and placed us here” (IV.416). Eve, on the other hand, immediately points out her secondary creation and the resulting inequality between them: “O thou for whom / And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh, / And without whom am to no end, my guide / And head” (IV.440-442). Accordingly, when Adam proposes to rest for the night, Eve responds in an obedient manner that emphasises her inferiority as a woman: “My author and disposer, what thou bidd’st / Unargued I obey; so God ordains, / God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more / Is woman’s happiest knowledge and her praise” (IV.635-638). Importantly, Polydorou points out that Adam asks God for a partner to be created with whom his relationship can be mutual, not equal (25). As is evident from their conversations in Book IV, Adam focuses on the companionship he seeks in Eve, as they can experience Paradise together in mutual

happiness. Eve, on the other hand, emphasises her inferiority and willing obedience to her superior partner.

When considering the adherence to hierarchy, Eve's explanation of her first moment of life is relevant as well, as this can be seen as the moment Eve learns her proper place in the gender hierarchy. At this point, Eve is still unaware of who she is herself and is also unaware of Adam's existence. When she looks into the lake, she sees her own reflection in the water:

> A shape within the wat'ry gleam appeared
> Bending to look on me: I started back,
> It started back, but pleased I soon returned,
> Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
> Of sympathy and love; there I had fixed
> Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire." (IV.461-466)

In this scene that reflects Ovid's myth of Narcissus, the gender roles are inverted. As opposed to the myth, in Book IV it is a woman who is attracted to her own appearance. Accordingly, upon her first sight of Adam she is not immediately interested in him: "yet methought less fair, / Less winning soft, less amiably mild, / Than that smooth wat'ry image" (IV.478-480). Yet, Adam quickly asserts his authority over her when she attempts to leave him: "thy gentle hand / Seized mine, I yielded, and from that time see / How beauty is excelled by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" (IV.488-491). Afterwards, Adam is "in delight / Both of her beauty and submissive charms" (IV.497-498). It is thus made explicit that her submission is an essential aspect of what makes Adam attracted to Eve. Overall, this scene can thus serve as an evident example of the establishment of a gender hierarchy, as Eve learns the value of being submissive to her male superior. Importantly, this also demonstrates that Eve's position in the gender hierarchy is not intuitive, as her submission to Adam has to be instructed.

Yet there are also occurrences throughout the poem where this hierarchy is seemingly inverted. Whereas Eve has been taught in Book IV that "beauty is excelled by manly grace / And wisdom", Adam reverses this order of importance in Book VIII. Adam admits to Raphael that, even though he is the strong and superior one, Eve's beauty constitutes a weakness in him and seems to elevate her to a superior level: "in all enjoyments else / Superior and unmoved, here only weak / Against the charm of beauty's powerful glance" (VIII.531-533). Even though Adam knows that she is "in outward show / Elaborate, of inward less intact", the degree of Eve's beauty gives her a sense of superiority: "so absolute she seems / And in herself complete, so well to know / Her own, that what she wills to do or say, / Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best" (VIII. 538-539; VIII.547-550). Adam, therefore, cannot be complete without Eve, yet Eve is described here with language that suggests not only superiority, but also a sense of autonomy (Schoenfeldt 371). Therefore, Adam's confession to Raphael contains an imagination of an inverted gender hierarchy, which does not correspond with Eve's inferior position. Yet, Raphael immediately warns Adam against focusing too much on her appearance, as this should not hinder her overall inferiority. According to Raphael, Adam is "attributing overmuch to things / Less excellent" (VIII.565-566). Raphael explains that Eve is "fair no doubt, and worthy well / Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love, / Not thy subjection: weigh with her thy self; / Then value (VIII.568-571). Therefore, Raphael admonishes Adam for not adhering to his superior rank, and thus insists on the necessity of adherence to the traditional gender hierarchy (Miller 155). Moreover, Raphael's instruction demonstrates that the gender hierarchy is not intuitive to Adam either, and both Adam and Eve thus had to be instructed on their proper positions.

Even though Adam is reminded of his authoritative role, there are also instances throughout the poem where Eve herself does not seem to fully conform to her supposed inferiority. Eve's final speech, for example, is an interesting aspect of her depiction

concerning the gender hierarchy. Some scholars have argued that her speech is of such importance, as it concerns the doctrine of salvation, that it can be perceived as undermining Eve's inferior role in the gender hierarchy:

> This further consolation yet secure
> I carry hence; though all by me is lost,
> Such favour I unworthy am vouchsafed,
> By me the promised Seed shall all restore. (XII.620-623)

Her redemptive affirmation suggests a role of leadership (McGrath 72). McGrath points out that, in addition to the content of her final speech the form can also be perceived as challenging Eve's inferiority (72). Eve's speech not only alludes to a former speech from Adam, it also depicts a creative independence through the utilisation of a formal musicality that is in accordance with the thematic content of redemption, for example (McGrath 74). Therefore, the form of Eve's speech suggests a degree of intelligence that does not necessarily constitute superiority, but does offer a contrast when compared to Adam's speech, which does not involve Eve's rhythmic symmetry (McGrath 75). Therefore, the fact that Eve's final speech emphasises her individuation and intelligence challenges the association of Eve with the inferiority that would be expected when adhering to the traditional hierarchy (McGrath 77).

In addition to Eve's final speech, there are other instances that emphasise her intelligence and independence as well. For example, the manner in which Eve obtains her knowledge about salvation differs significantly from Adam's in several aspects. First of all, Eve's knowledge is obtained through a dream, meaning that she wakes up with the knowledge that takes longer for Adam to comprehend, who learns it through his conversation with Michael (McGrath 78). Therefore, there seems to be a suggestion of Eve obtaining the knowledge more intuitively than Adam. Additionally, it is suggested in the poem that visions

in dreams are directly from God, which contrasts with Adam's acquiring knowledge from an angel: "For God is also in sleep, and dreams advise, / Which he hath sent propitious" (XII.611-612). Moreover, Eve's adequate intelligence is emphasised when Raphael comes to Earth to have a conversation with Adam, and Eve leaves voluntarily to tend to the garden instead of joining their conversation. Importantly, the poem emphasises the reason for her absence: "Yet went she not, as not with such discourse / Delighted, or not capable of her ear / Of what was high: such pleasures she reserv'd, / Adam relating, she sole Auditress" (VIII.45-51). Therefore, she is not incapable of comprehending the conversation, nor is she commanded to leave. Instead, she remains more passive concerning matters of importance, in order to let Adam be the leader. This example shows that Eve is not necessarily portrayed as being intellectually inferior, but as having a "natural inclination to gratify her husband" instead, as she is aware of and willingly conforms to her secondary position (Polydorou 30).

Yet, according to Schoenfeldt, Eve's desire for a separation in Book IX "exhibits an autonomy" that "is in tension with obedience to her companion" (368). Eve argues for autonomy, as she argues that they will remain "secure" whether they are together or separated (IX.339). Instead of autonomy, Adam suggests the benefits of a mutual dependency in order to avoid temptation: "That I should mind thee oft, and mind thou me" (IX.358). After the Fall, Eve wonders why Adam, who is supposed to be her guide, did not adhere to his authoritative role in order to forbid her to leave: "why didst not thou the head / Command me absolutely not to go" (IX. 1155-1156). But Adam suggests that he can guide her, but not command her: "what could I more? / I warned thee, I admonished thee, foretold / The danger", as "force upon free will hath here no place" (IX.1170-1171; IX.1174). Therefore, even though Adam could have commanded her, his explanation emphasises the importance of willing submission to authority, instead of being forced. Additionally, the scene illustrates that, despite Eve's inferior rank in the gender hierarchy, she does seem to desire a certain degree of autonomy.

In addition to Eve's desire for autonomy, there are also occurrences in which she desires to transcend her inferior rank. Accordingly, Eve's sense of inferiority is an essential factor in the possibility of the Fall. Through awakening her desire for increased knowledge and status it is possible for Satan to tempt her into disobedience. First of all, in addressing Eve, he uses epithets that suggest superiority throughout his speech, such as "sov'reign mistress" and "Empress of this fair world" (IX.532; IX.568). As Eve's secondary creation suggests a more distant relation with God than Adam's, Satan explicitly associates Eve with divinity. Accordingly, he calls her "Goddess humane" and describes her as the "Fairest resemblance of thy Maker" (IX.732-538). Additionally, Satan argues that Eve "shouldst be seen / A goddess among gods, adored and served / By angels numberless (IX.546-548). Because of Eve's inferior rank, she is destined to obey her superior, yet Satan argues that "thou shouldst be obeyed" (IX.570). Satan's supposed eating of the Tree of Knowledge increased his rank beyond what he was destined for as a serpent, which serves as an example of how Eve's rank could be superior: "life more perfect have attained than Fate / Meant me, by vent'ring higher than my lot" (IX.689-690). Satan's instigation of Eve's desire for superiority in his temptation is successful and after her transgression she immediately considers not sharing her increased knowledge with Adam: "shall I … keep the odds of knowledge in my power / Without copartner? so to add what wants / In female sex, the more to draw his love, / And render me more equal, and perhaps, / A thing not undesirable, sometime / Superior; for inferior who is free?" (9.817-825). Therefore, both the temptation scene and Eve's postlapsarian inclination to remain superior to Adam, depict the significant extent to which Eve now seems to desire superiority, and thus suggests an inversion of the gender hierarchy.

After the Fall, Adam still does not fully seem to adhere to the principles of gender hierarchy which Raphael has sought to inculcate in him. Accordingly, Adam's inability to

fully perceive Eve as inferior makes it difficult for him to comprehend her transgression: “O fairest of Creation, last and best / Of all God’s works, creature in whom excelled / Whatever can to sight or thought be formed, / Holy, divine, good, amiable or sweet! How art thou lost” (IX.896-900). When Adam explains his disobedience, it is evident that his transgression is the result of his failure of perceiving himself as autonomous, and following Eve’s lead instead (Schoenfeldt 374). Accordingly, the Son immediately insists on a re-establishment of the traditional gender hierarchy:

> Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey
> Before his voice, or was she made thy guide,
> Superior, or but equal, that to her
> Thou didst resign thy manhood, and the place
> Wherein God set thee above her made of thee,
> And for thee, whose perfection far excelled
> Hers in all real dignity (X.145-151)

Accordingly, the appropriate punishment for their disobedience is a return to the adherence to a rigid gender hierarchy: “to thy husband’s will / Thine shall submit, he over thee shall rule” (X.195-196).

While the conversations between Adam and Eve suggest that gender hierarchy has been restored successfully, the poem also suggests that such an adherence to gender hierarchy is troublesome. For example, Adam’s reaction to Eve’s transgression has severely changed from wondering why someone so excellent could transgress, into “Out of my sight, thou serpent” (X.867). Whereas his initial reaction suggested that Eve’s creation was superior, he now realises that “all was but a show / Rather than solid virtue, all but a rib / Crookèd by nature, bent, as now appears, / More to the part siníster from me drawn” (X.883-886). This passage directly echoes Joseph Swetnam’s argument that “women are crooked by nature”

because “a rib is a crooked thing good for nothing else”, which he included in his controversial pamphlet *The Arraignment of Women* (1615) that aimed at arguing for the inferiority of women (1). Accordingly, Eve seems to accept her inferiority and Adam’s authority. She has learned from her transgression and now relies on Adam, the superior reasoner, to follow his decisions: “But now lead on; / In me there is no delay; with thee to go, / Is to stay here; without thee to stay, / Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me / Are all things under heaven, all places thou” (XII.614-18; Wiseman 545). She now comprehends the severity of her transgression and fully blames herself by calling it “my wilful crime” (XII.619). However, the poem illustrates that this seeming restoration of gender hierarchy is troublesome, as Adam begins to acknowledge his own responsibility for the Fall, instead of letting Eve take on the full blame:

> That on my head all might be visited
> Thy frailtie and infirmer Sex forgiv'n,
> To me committed and by me expos'd.
> But rise, let us no more contend, nor blame
> Each other (X.955-959).

Therefore, the poem remains ambivalent concerning the re-establishment of gender hierarchy.

In addition to these deviations, McGrath points out that while Eve’s responses to Adam may seem submissive, they can still be interpreted as containing aspects that oppose adherence to the gender hierarchy (80). For example, the phrase “lead on” does not necessarily mean that Eve is subjecting herself to Adam’s leadership. McGrath points out that Raphael instructs Adam to “lead on” earlier in the poem, suggesting that commanding someone to lead can be a way of leading (80-81). In addition, Eve’s statement that “thou to me / Are all things under heaven, all places thou” can be interpreted as implying subordination to Adam (XII.617-618). Yet, Adam has made similar statements about Eve

earlier in the poem. Therefore, such phrases of affection can be interpreted as instances of mutual gratitude, rather than submission (McGrath 82). It is important to take such examples into consideration, as they enhance the complexity of Milton's representation of gender hierarchy.

Overall, it is evident that Milton's representation of gender is complex and does not include a straightforward adherence to a hierarchy. In both the divorce tract and *Paradise Lost* there is a representation of a mutuality between genders that coexists with the traditional gender hierarchy. The representation of gender in *Paradise Lost* seems to get more complex, however, as it includes deviations from the traditional gender hierarchy. Not only are there suggestions of equality, there are also suggestions of a hierarchy inversion. Ultimately, however, the epic poem seems to remain ambivalent concerning the re-establishment of the traditional hierarchy.

Chapter 3: The Hierarchical Relationship Between Man and Nature

Milton's representation of the relation between humans and nature in *Paradise Lost* is another aspect in which hierarchy is evidently of importance. Whereas there are suggestions of a human dominion, and thus authority, over nature, the overall representation in the poem seems to suggest a mutuality between prelapsarian Adam and Eve and their Garden. Therefore, Milton seems to portray the ideal form of hierarchy between humanity and nature, which is mutually beneficial. After the Fall, however, this interdependent relationship ceases to exist. Therefore, throughout *Paradise Lost* Milton's discussion of nature includes a preoccupation with hierarchy, as Milton portrays an adherence to as well as a deviation from the beneficial hierarchical relationship between man and nature.

First of all, there are instances in the poem that illustrate that Adam and Eve have obtained authority over nature, which demonstrates the establishment of a hierarchy. Adam and Eve are given the Garden of Eden by God: "This Paradise I give thee, count it thine / To till and keep" (VIII.319-320). Whereas God's statement does not necessarily include a sense of human superiority, Adam's interpretation in Book XII suggests that human domination over animals is rightful: "He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl / Dominion absolute; that right we hold / By his donation" (XII.67-69). This sense of dominion is in accordance with Genesis's account of creation: "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (*King James Bible,* Gen. 1.26). Therefore, through Adam, the poem voices the idea that God has given Adam and Eve the right to have dominion over the Garden and its animals, thus suggesting a hierarchical relationship between Adam and Eve and the Garden.

Yet Hiltner points out that having obtained a dominion does not necessarily imply a type of authority or superiority ("Place Defined" 25-26). The term 'dominion', which is used in both the Bible and *Paradise Lost*, is derived from the Latin word *domus*, which means 'house', and possibly the Greek *demein*, which means 'to build' (Hiltner, "Place Defined" 26). Therefore, Adam and Eve obtaining the dominion over the Garden of Eden can also be interpreted as obtaining the Garden as their place of residence, a place to build their home. In accordance with this interpretation, the poem emphasises the importance of Adam and Eve having a responsibility to take care of their place of residence. For example, God tells Adam that it is their responsibility to "To till and keep" the Garden (VIII.320). Accordingly, Adam and Eve seem to have a sense of vocation to keep their responsibility and take care of their natural environment: "On to their morning's rural work they haste" (V.211; Hiltner, "Place Given" 41). While Adam and Eve see it as their task to take care of the garden, it is also a willing choice they make as they find it "delightful" and see it as a manner to indirectly serve and praise God: "let us ever praise him, and extol / His bounty, following our delightful task / To prune these growing plants, and tend these flow'rs" (IV.436-438). The importance of Adam and Eve's responsibility towards the Garden is also emphasised in the second chapter of Genesis: "the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2.15). Therefore, *Paradise Lost* seems to include a combination of a sense of dominion and responsibility that is in line with the passages in Genesis. Accordingly, even though Adam and Eve have rightfully obtained the authority over their natural surroundings, this authority includes a responsibility.

Accordingly, Goodman argues that Milton portrays the ideal type of relation between master and subject in his portrayal of the relationship between Adam and Eve and the Garden, as the poem demonstrates beneficial "human mastership" and "nature's role as ideal subject" (13). On the one hand, the poem suggests that by being intellectual creatures who can exercise

reason, humans have rightfully obtained a type of mastership in the natural hierarchy (Goodman 10). Yet, Adam and Eve do not rule over the natural world merely out of self-interest, but they actively serve their subjects (Goodman 13). For example, they only take as food what disburdens nature, such as fruit, thus "finding sustenance which disburdens without bringing harm or hardship" (Goodman 12). In addition, nature requires their guidance in order to flourish, which shows that "even ideal subjects 'need' the rule of masters" (Goodman 13). Therefore, Adam and Eve make use of what nature provides them, and in return Adam and Eve provide nature with the care that it needs. Accordingly, Adam and Eve exercise a type of authority that includes a responsibility to serve their subjects, and the subjects respond obediently to the beneficial rule (Goodman 13).

Importantly, Milton's portrayal of a mutually beneficial relationship between the prelapsarian humans and their natural environment relies on Milton's inclusion of material monism and especially vitalism. First of all, the monist belief that all creations are composed of the same matter, derived from God, suggests a certain spiritual quality in everything. In his prose work *Of Christian Doctrine* [*De Doctrina Christiana*] Milton explains that "both the Holy Scriptures and reason itself suggest that all these things were made not out of nothing but out of matter" and that there is a "divine breath which creates and nourishes everything" (*Christian Doctrine* 443; 437). Accordingly, Raphael explains to Adam in *Paradise Lost*: "one Almighty is, from whom / All things proceed, and up to him return, / If not depraved from good, created all / Such to perfection, one first matter all" (V.469-471). Moreover, as Marcus explains, Milton's monism is combined with an adherence to vitalism, which suggests that "all creation partakes of spirit in varying degrees, and that all created beings therefore have free will, the ability to perceive and make moral choices and to exert material agency" (98). Therefore, Milton's adherence to vitalism results in an ability on the part of nature to

respond to Adam and Eve and willingly choose whether to obey or disobey the human couple (McColley 162).

The portrayal of a mutually beneficial hierarchy is evident from the fact that nature seems to respond to Adam and Eve's care and obey them willingly in return. The garden's animals, for example, are described as not only playing with each other but even attempting to entertain Adam and Eve: "th'unwieldy elephant / To make them mirth used all his might, and wreathed / His lithe proboscis" (IV.345-347). In addition to the elephant desiring to make the couple happy, nature itself willingly conforms to Adam and Eve's wishes. For example, when Adam and Eve want to eat, the acquiring of food does not require any labour: "to their supper fruits they fell / Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs / Yielded them" (IV.331-333). In return, it is evident that Adam and Eve respect nature and make no distinction between creatures in their morning prayers, as all of God's creations should praise him: "On earth join all ye creatures to extol / Him" (V.164-165). This includes nature itself: "wave your tops, ye pines, / With every plant, in sign of worship wave", as well as the animals: "Join voices all ye living souls, ye birds, / … Bear on your wings and in your notes his praise" (V.193-194; V.197-199). Overall, it is evident from these passages that there is a depiction of a mutual respect and care between the prelapsarian human couple and nature.

In spite of the couple's respectful attitude toward the Garden, Hodgson points out that *Paradise Lost* also demonstrates a significant difference between Adam and Eve's individual connections to the Garden (51). For example, Adam does express a sense of human superiority over the Garden's animals:

> other creatures all day long
> Rove idle unemployed, and less need rest;
> Man hath his daily work of body or mind
> Appointed, which declares his dignity,

And the regard of Heav'n on all his ways;

While other animals unactive range,

And of their doings God takes no account" (IV.616-622).

In addition, Adam's relation to the Garden is more task-oriented, as he seems more concerned about their responsibility to care for the garden: "branches overgrown, / That mock our scant manuring, and require / More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth" (IV.627-629). Eve, on the other hand, demonstrates a strong emotional connection to the Garden that is reminiscent of her connection with Adam (Hodgson 51). Accordingly, whereas Adam describes their tasks with words such as 'require', Eve expresses that she obtains more delight from Eden in her sonnet: "pleasant the sun / When first on this delightful land he spreads / His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flow'r" (IV.642-4). Importantly, her sonnet describes her feelings for Eden before she expresses her feelings for Adam, which illustrates the importance of her individual connection with the garden.

Hodgson points out that this connection is unexpected, as the identification of Eve with the Garden was used in contemporary literature to emphasise Eve's perfection and blamelessness (50). According to Hodgson, Milton's Eve does not conform to this representation, as "*Paradise Lost* both insists upon Eve's subordinate, secondary and originary role and also grants her a particularly affective identification with the garden" (50). Hodgson concludes that the poem remains contradictory concerning Eve's representation, as she is represented as being inferior to Adam as well as being equalled to the Garden and its perfection (53). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Milton is not consistent in insisting Eve's inferior position and the poem remains ambivalent concerning gender hierarchies. Moreover, because of Eve's close connection to the Garden, her relationship with Eden evidently portrays the existence of a mutually beneficial hierarchy, rather than an equality with the Garden's perfection.

For example, Eve takes care of the plants and flowers as if they are her children. When she leaves Adam to speak with Raphael, it is described that Eve "Rose, and went forth among her fruits and flow'rs, / To visit how they prospered, bud and bloom, / Her nursery" (VIII.44-46). The fact that they are described as being 'her' fruits and flowers, instead of 'their', suggests the difference in connection that Eve has with her garden, when compared to Adam. The plants and flowers themselves are described in an anthropomorphised manner and seem to benefit emotionally from her presence: "they at her coming sprung / And touched by her fair tendance gladlier grew" (VIII.46-47). Therefore, these examples depict that both Eve and her flowers benefit emotionally from her care.

In addition to the fact that there is a mutual benefit on an emotional level, the flowers seem to take care of Eve in return for her care of them. For example, Satan's description of Eve in Book IV illustrates this mutual relationship between Eve and the Garden:

> Eve separate he spies
> Veiled in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood,
> Half spied, so thick the roses bushing round
> About her glowed, oft stooping to support
> Each flow'r of slender stalk, whose head though gay
> Carnation, purple, azure, or specked with gold,
> Hung drooping unsustained; them she upstays
> Gently with myrtle band (IX.424-431).

Whilst Eve is taking care of the flowers, the flowers seem to take care of her by clouding her in fragrance and rose bushes, seemingly in a protective manner. From Satan's perspective, Eve almost seems part of the flowers she is tending to. Accordingly, when Satan finds Eve there without Adam, he describes her as the "fairest unsupported flow'r" (IX.432). Therefore,

this scene evidently depicts the existence of a mutually beneficial hierarchy, as the flowers protect the person that takes care of them.

Another important concept within the poem that is related to this hierarchical structure is the notion of plenitude. Accordingly, before the Fall, the abundance that nature provides is a manner in which nature sustains and thus cares for its human inhabitants: “Nature multiplies / Her fertile growth, and by disburd’ning grows / More fruitful, which instructs us not to spare” (V.318-320). Accordingly, Milton creates a self-sustaining Garden, which produces all the necessary sustenance for its inhabitants, who care for the Garden in return (Tigner 196). The first description of the Garden is from Satan’s perspective, who is amazed by the “wealth” nature offers the human couple in such a “narrow” space: “In narrow room Nature’s whole wealth, yea more, / A Heav’n on earth: for blissful Paradise / Of God the garden was” (IV.207-209). Satan’s description of the Garden is filled with an amazement of Adam and Eve’s natural environment, to such an extent that the delight of the garden makes him envious: “the Fiend / Saw undelighted all delight” (IV.285-286). In addition, when God informs Adam about the Garden, he ensures that there will be an abundance of food available: “Of every tree that in the garden grows / Eat freely with glad heart; fear here no dearth” (VIII.321-322). Therefore, when Eve prepares food for their angelic guest Raphael, Adam wants Eve to provide them with “such choice” that Raphael “shall confess that here on earth / God hath dispensed his bounties as in Heav’n” (V.327-330). Accordingly, Eve gathers “tribute large” and gathers a collection of fruit “with unsparing hand” (V.343-344). As DuRocher points out, Earth is frequently personified as a mother, who has not only given life to its creations but also sustains them through this abundance of natural food (115).
This prelapsarian relationship between the human couple and nature that is based on reciprocity, changes considerably after the Fall. The fact that their connection will no longer be similar is demonstrated by the sentient Earth’s immediate response to Eve’s disobedience:

her rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat:
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe,
That all was lost (IX.780-784).

Additionally, upon Adam's following disobedience "Earth trembled from her entrails, as again / In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan; / Sky loured, and muttering thunder, some sad drops / Wept at completing of the mortal sin / Original" (IX.1000-1004). In addition to the Earth being hurt by the Fall in a manner reminiscent of child birth, the first thunderstorm is the resulting response. Milton's personification of the responsive Earth deviates significantly from the biblical account of the Fall, as Genesis focuses exclusively on the consequences for humans (DuRocher 95). However, the Bible does present the Earth as sentient when it responds to the death of Christ with an earthquake: "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Matthew 27.51; DuRocher 95). Therefore, Milton seems to take this notion of a lamenting Earth and connects it with the Fall, in order to shift the focus to the natural consequences of the Fall. Overall, the Earth's woundedness demonstrates the connection it previously had with Adam and Eve, as well as the loss of this connection and it thus foreshadows the loss of the previously beneficial hierarchical structure.

Accordingly, after Adam and Eve's disobedience, their natural environment loses the compliance that it previously showed towards them. Whereas the boughs willingly gave the prelapsarian couple its fruit in a "compliant" manner, the postlapsarian couple has to labour for their food: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (IV.332; X.205). There is a comparable change from the prelapsarian compliance of nature to postlapsarian Adam commanding the leaves to cover him: "cover me ye pines, / ye cedars, with innumerable

boughs / Hide me" (IX.1088-1090). In addition, the ground from which they disobediently took the apple is now cursed and has become more difficult to work in: "Thorns also and thistles it shall bring thee forth" (X.203). Moreover, the behaviour of the Garden's animals changes:

> Beast now with beast gan war, and fowl with fowl,
> And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,
> Devoured each other; nor stood much in awe
> Of man, but fled him, or with count'nance grim
> Glared on him passing (X.710-714).

Whereas the prelapsarian animals lived peacefully among each other, they are now violent toward each other. More importantly, they actively avoid the fallen Adam and Eve and stare at them disapprovingly. As mentioned earlier, the prelapsarian Adam and Eve had an agreeable relationship with their Garden's animals, which actively attempted to make the human couple happy. Therefore, these examples illustrate that after Adam and Eve's disobedience toward God, their natural environment no longer obeys them, and the mutually beneficial hierarchy has thus been lost.

In addition to the representation of a natural environment that is sentient, there are also representations of divine intervention as an influence on nature. Marcus explores Milton's seemingly contradictory combination of vitalism and divine intervention in the poem (97). On the one hand, Milton's depiction of the natural changes after the Fall can be interpreted as adhering to vitalism, as nature seems to directly and independently react to the disobedience (Marcus 98). For example, there are suggestions of the Earth itself responding to the Fall of its own free will: "At that tasted fruit / The sun, as from Thyéstean banquet, turned his course intended" (X.687-689). Yet, the poem also suggests that some natural changes are the result of God's punishment, meaning that divine intervention is the direct cause of the degradation

of nature: “Some say he bid his angels turn askance / The poles of earth twice ten degrees and more / From the sun’s axle” (X.668-670; Marcus 98). Yet, the fact that the poem includes the phrase “some say” several times creates an ambiguity concerning the direct cause of the degradation of nature. This ambiguity is important to take into consideration as it calls into question the extent to which nature itself responds directly to Adam and Eve. While it is important to take the divine interventionist elements into account, there are frequent descriptions of a sentient and independent Earth throughout the poem. For example, it is the Earth itself that creates its beings, not God himself: “The earth obeyed, and straight / Op’ning her fertile womb teemed at a birth / Innumerous living creatures” (VII.453-455). Therefore, while the poem includes an ambiguity regarding the cause of nature’s reactions to the Fall, there are various representations of a sentient environment that responds to its human inhabitants by means of moral judgment.

Moreover, it is emphasised that it would not be possible for the Garden to keep the postlapsarian Adam and Eve as its inhabitants, as the Garden will no longer be obedient. First of all, the Father explains that remaining in Paradise would not be a possibility, as the Garden would actively reject them as a result of their new impurity:

> But longer in that Paradise to dwell,
> The law I gave to Nature him forbids:
> Those pure immortal elements that know
> No gross, no unharmonious mixture foul,
> Eject him tainted now, and purge him off
> As a distemper (XI.48-53)

Therefore, the Archangel Michael tells them that it is necessary for them to leave Paradise: “Longer in this Paradise to dwell / Permits not; to remove thee I am come, / And send thee from the garden forth to till / The ground whence thou wast taken, fitter soil” (XI.259-262).

That it is not suitable for Adam and Eve to remain in the Garden demonstrates the loss of the previous, reciprocal and mutually beneficial hierarchy, as it would not be possible for the Garden to obey its human inhabitants after their disobedience.

Adam and Eve's reaction to the loss of the Garden shows their emotional connection to the garden, and emphasises the loss of their mutually beneficial hierarchy. Accordingly, it is significant that Eve immediately laments having to leave the Garden: "O unexpected stroke, worse than of Death! / Must I thus leave thee Paradise?" (XI.268-269). In addition to directly addressing the Garden as if it were a person, she expresses her lamentation over the loss of her flowers as if she is forced to leave her own children: "which I bred up with tender hand / From the first op'ning bud, and gave ye names" (XI.276-277). Accordingly, the hope of remaining in Eden for their postlapsarian future was a type of consolation for her: "I had hope to spend, / Quiet though sad, the respite of that day / That must be mortal to us both" (XI.271-273). Adam's reaction to the loss of their Garden also illustrates the reciprocal relationship that has now been lost: "all places else / Inhospitable appear and desolate, / Nor knowing us nor known" (XI.305-307). Adam's remark illustrates that their lamentation does not just concern their loss of a Paradisal Garden, but the loss of the reciprocal connection they had with the Garden.

In addition to Milton's portrayal of the loss of the reciprocal hierarchy between Adam and Eve and their natural environment, the poem also contains an additional representation of humans' exploitation of the earth, and thus demonstrates a hierarchy that is not mutually beneficial. In fact, the poem's first instance of a personified Earth is when the devils build Pandaemonium and "Ransacked the centre, and with impious hands / Rifled the bowels of their mother Earth / For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew / Opened into the hill a spacious wound / And digged out ribs of gold" (I.686-690). Instead of taking care of their place of residence, like prelapsarian Adam and Eve did for their Garden, the devils exploit

their surroundings. As a result, the Earth is wounded in a manner reminiscent of the consequences of the Fall of Man. Moreover, this passage echoes the manner in which postlapsarian humanity will behave in relation to their natural environment. Accordingly, Book II includes another description of postlapsarian humanity, which emphasises the future exploitation of Earth: “yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife / Among themselves, and levy cruel wars, / Wasting the Earth, each other to destroy” (II.500-502). These examples depict a postlapsarian adherence to a hierarchy where the authority behaves out of self-interest, as the Earth is taken advantage of and humanity does not take responsibility to care for its natural environment.

Yet the poem also emphasises a hopeful illustration of a future in which there will be a possible restoration of the previous connection between man and nature, as the Earth will be restored. Marcus argues that the poem offers a vitalist account of this restoration, in which humanity’s moral purification will lead to a restoration of their natural surroundings (104). However, the poem seems to mainly emphasise the importance of the Second Coming of Christ as the agent of this restoration. As Michael explains to Adam: “so shall the world go on … Under her own weight groaning, till the day / Appear of respiration to the just, / And vengeance to the wicked, at return / Of him so lately promised to thy aid” (XII.537-542). The Second Coming of Christ will not only restore humankind, but the Earth will be restored as well:

> to dissolve
> Satan with his perverted World, then raise
> From the conflagrant mass, purg'd and refin'd,
> New Heav'ns, new Earth, Ages of endless date
> Founded in righteousness and peace and love
> To bring forth fruits Joy and eternal Bliss (XII.546-551).

Therefore, whereas the connection between humanity and the natural world has been lost after the Fall there is a sense of hope for a restoration of this connection in the future.

Overall, it is evident that Milton utilises his portrayal of humans' relation to their natural environment as a manner to depict an adherence to the ideal form of hierarchy, which is mutually beneficial. Prelapsarian Adam and Eve have authority over their Garden, but also take care of their surroundings. In return, the Garden seems to obey their authority and care for them. After the Fall, however, nature responds to the human couple's disobedience towards God and begin to disobey Adam and Eve. Additionally, Milton also depicts a harmful hierarchy, where the devils and postlapsarian humanity take advantage of the Earth instead of caring for it. Therefore, Milton evidently adheres to a hierarchical structure in his portrayal of the relationship between man and nature.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined Milton's representation of hierarchy in *Paradise Lost* and the relevant prose works. From analysing Milton's representations of hierarchy within three different contexts it has become apparent that Milton is preoccupied with the theme of hierarchy. As discussed in the first chapter, Milton's discussion of government is largely concerned with the relation between the monarch and his subjects. Milton believes that only someone who is naturally superior should be able to obtain authority over others, which is not the manner in which a monarch is selected. Even though the monarch has obtained a position of power, Milton calls into question the extent to which subjects are obliged to obey the monarch, and explains in what circumstances subjects should have the right to choose the termination of their own ruler. Milton defends the importance of sustaining a political hierarchy, as he argues that the existence of authority is necessary. Yet, the figure invested with governmental power should be accountable to his or her subjects, and subjects should have the rational freedom to have demands about the manner in which they are governed. A similar argument is made in Milton's discussion of church government and its hierarchical structure. Milton argues against the episcopal order of the Church of England and is especially concerned with what he sees as the unrightful power of bishops. Instead of being forced to conform to a uniform practice of religion, Milton argues for the benefit of autonomous congregations that will allow the individual the rational freedom to personally search for religious truth. Overall, Milton argues for the importance of obedience to political authority when it is just, whilst also arguing for the right to resist authority when it is unjust.

Milton's representation of gender offers another perspective on Milton's understanding of hierarchy. Yet Milton's representation of the gender hierarchy seems to remain ambivalent. On the one hand, his divorce tracts argue for a kind of mutuality and lack

of hierarchy between husband and wife. At the same time, the mutuality Milton argues for is based on male superiority. Therefore, there is a prominent gender hierarchy apparent in both Milton's prose tract and in *Paradise Lost*, as a wife is supposed to serve a husband's emotional needs. This suggests that Milton advocates a mutuality between husband and wife that is nevertheless confined to the limitations of traditional gender hierarchies. Yet it can be argued that Eve is not consistently represented as inferior to Adam, which suggests a disruption of the gender hierarchy. Therefore, Milton's representation of the gender hierarchy remains ambivalent, as he does illustrate an adherence to the traditional hierarchy, as well as a deviation from this order.

Finally, Milton's preoccupation with hierarchy is also apparent in his engagement with nature, as he represents the relation between man and nature in *Paradise Lost*. On the one hand, it is explained that God has given Adam and Eve the responsibility of looking after the Garden of Eden, suggesting that Adam and Eve have obtained the authority over their Garden. Yet instead of depicting humans as the rulers of nature, the poem seems to suggest a harmonious relationship between Adam and Eve and their Garden. Still, nature is personified as a character that willingly obeys Adam and Eve, suggesting that there is a mutually beneficial hierarchical structure. However, this connection between man and nature changes after the Fall, as nature no longer willingly obeys Adam and Eve and the interdependent dynamic ceases to exist. Therefore, Milton's overall representation of the relationship between man and nature illustrates the importance of a mutually beneficial hierarchical structure.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, Milton represents hierarchy in a different manner depending on the context. Whereas Milton's concept of political hierarchy necessitates a superior authority, Milton's representation of gender hierarchy remains ambivalent, while the prelapsarian relation between human beings and their natural environment is at times almost

non-hierarchical. Yet there is also an element that is of importance within all three of the contexts discussed, namely the sense of mutuality. Within all three contexts, Milton's representation of a beneficial hierarchical structure is dependent on a mutual welfare between the different parties within a hierarchical relationship. For example, within the political hierarchy Milton argues that a king should serve his subjects, and the subjects should obey the king in return. In addition, Milton emphasises the importance of a mutual happiness between husband and wife within their gender hierarchy. Finally, Milton represents a harmonious type of hierarchical relation between man and nature, in which the relationship is mutually beneficial. Additionally, this type of mutually beneficial hierarchy relies on Milton's insistence on the importance of free will. In order for Milton's ideal forms of hierarchy to function there needs to be an availability to freely choose to obey one's superior. If obedience is not a choice, one is subjected to a tyrannical hierarchical structure instead.

Overall, several things become apparent when analysing Milton's representations of hierarchy within these three contexts. First of all, the fact that Milton includes hierarchical structures within all three contexts serves as evidence for an evident preoccupation with the theme of hierarchy. Yet Milton's adherence to hierarchical structures is not always straightforward and differs depending on the context. However, Milton's understanding of an ideal hierarchy is similar in all three contexts, as Milton's representation of the ideal hierarchy revolves around a sense of mutual advantage between ranks in order for the structure to be beneficial. Therefore, Milton shows a sustained preoccupation with the theme of hierarchy, offering an understanding of the nature of hierarchy that is context-dependent, yet with the unifying aspects of mutuality and free will.

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