

THE SATAN OF PARADISE LOST:
CONVENTION AND ORIGINALITY

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

EARLY TREATMENTS OF SATAN

Although utilizing the material left behind by centuries of writers, Milton (1608-1674) proves himself to be a creative poet. His best poetic effort, Paradise Lost, which was first published in the late summer of 1667, is a "mature epic" that "sprang from ancient roots."¹ In this great achievement, he is justifying "the ways of God to men" and, consequently, emphasizing the basic good of the created order and the free will of each of God's creatures.² Primarily, Milton deals with the decision of Lucifer, God's bearer of light, to rebel and his resultant fall, which causes him to become Satan, the Adversary, the Prince of Darkness; he also handles the fall of man, which results from a similar choice. The story that Milton retells of the "celestial cycle--the

¹Grant McColley, "Paradise Lost": An Account of Its Growth and Major Origins, with a Discussion of Milton's Use of Sources and Literary Patterns (1940; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 269. (Hereinafter, this work is referred to as Sources.)

²John Milton, Paradise Lost, in John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. by Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957), i.26. (All other references to the text of the poem will appear parenthetically by book and line number in the body of the paper.)

creation of the world, the apostasy or war in Heaven, the temptation and fall of man, and the redemption of man by Christ--had been written literally hundreds of times in different languages and different literary genres between pre-Christian times and Milton's own day."³ The seventeenth-century Christian and Puritan poet's Paradise Lost and its Satan are a product of the author's style, of his religious faith, of the political happenings of the latter part of the seventeenth century, and of classical and Christian literature.

Milton selects material and imaginatively reworks it so that it becomes elevated and majestic. The Fall of Man is his story, despite a necessary dependence on historical and legendary data. Indeed, "remoulding and creating with fine disregard for precedent" seems to be Milton's special field of accomplishment.⁴ The epic form dictates, but Milton hears what he wants. His Paradise Lost with its scholarly and aesthetic allusiveness, its expanded similes, and its proleptic comparisons is not a classical epic. According to Aristotle, unity is an essential quality of an epic; he says that an epic poet must keep his

³Frank Sullivan Kastor, "Lucifer, Satan, and the Devil: A Genesis of Apparent Inconsistencies in Paradise Lost," Dissertation Abstracts, XXIV, No. 12, Part II (June, 1964), 5386.

⁴James Holly Hanford, A Milton Handbook (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1946), p. 294.

action limited to one major event and character.⁵ Milton can be criticized unjustly, if one does not study his Preface to the Reason of Church Government, where he delineates his ideas on the subject. Milton's epic is not like those "of Homer and Virgil," deliberately; it is a "romantic or chivalrous epic" like those "of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Spenser." His form differs, says C. S. Lewis, from that of the conventional works in three ways: "firstly by its lavish use of the marvellous, secondly by the place given to love, and thirdly by the multiple action of interwoven stories."⁶ Rather than concentrating attention largely on one character, in this case Satan or Adam, Milton first emphasizes one character and then the other. Satan is the protagonist, and then the place with greater structural emphasis, the closing books, is assigned to Adam.⁷ Paradise Lost is, indeed, an epic of multiple unities, drawn together by a single design. The events of primary interest in the matter at hand, however, will be those involving the Archfiend, Satan, Milton's "best drawn" character.⁸

Despite Milton's eclectic religious beliefs, which were classically Christian with Platonic and common

⁵C. S. Lewis, A Preface to "Paradise Lost" (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 5, citing Aristotle.

⁶Ibid., pp. 3, 5-6.

⁷McColley, Sources, pp. 14-15.

⁸Lewis, A Preface to "Paradise Lost", p. 100.

Reformation modifications, his innovations of historical material are carefully limited to mere supplements of an established framework.⁹ His Satan, for example, follows the usual pattern of behavior in heaven, in hell, and on earth; Adam and Eve respond to their position in a traditional manner; and the Garden of Eden is the beautiful place described in the Bible.

Although "he did not always transform the idea or substance, he never failed to add some contribution truly his own."¹⁰ "The principle of moral freedom is central in Milton's theological thought, and as applied to Adam, it is the heart of his justification of the ways of God to man."¹¹ Always Milton stresses the superiority of reason over passion. His metaphysics are a little unorthodox, for he insists that God created the world out of Himself, that angels have corporeal bodies, and that heaven and earth are analogous.¹² Regardless of Milton's eclectic and idealistic and individualistic faith, Paradise Lost is a poem almost anyone can appreciate, for its purpose is "the glory of God."¹³

⁹Hanford, A Milton Handbook, pp. 227-28.

¹⁰McColley, Sources, p. 341.

¹¹Hanford, A Milton Handbook, p. 230.

¹²Ibid., p. 232.

¹³McColley, Sources, p. 341.

The conglomeration of ideas that characterize Milton's religious faith is condensed into his De Doctrina Christiana, which was published in 1825, long after his death. This work is not considered by some to be very original; however, it does help one see that the epic poet was "untouched either by intellectual snobbishness or religious prejudice."¹⁴ Because Milton believed himself to be a "Spokesman" or "Chosen One" of God, frequently he appears to lack modesty. He felt that he had been selected to tell the Truth to mankind. "This was not mysticism, but rather an impersonal faith in human Reason, together with a half-classical, half-Calvinistic belief in 'election'." Milton was a man, then, with a purpose. His words were "God-directed" and "imperative," according to him, at least.¹⁵

Morris Freedman agrees that Paradise Lost is not a "'typical' seventeenth-century epic"; he says that in this composition Milton "was responding to contemporary events and issues. . . ." The conference of devils at Pandemonium has been compared to the rebellious parliament in England of the late 1650's. Speculatively, Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, who became the first Earl of Shaftesbury, may have been Milton's model for his devil. Cooper fell

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 336-37.

¹⁵William Riley Parker, Milton: A Biography, Vol. I: The Life (Oxford: Clarendon Press of the Oxford University Press, 1968), p. vii.

as Satan fell; he dropped "from his eminence as intimate associate and supporter of Cromwell to advocate of all that Milton abhorred."¹⁶ Milton identifies himself more as an equal sovereign power to Cromwell and his associates in his First and Second Defenses than as a subordinate in the government, which he was.¹⁷ Although he favored middle-class values in a time of pomp and elaborate fashions, his writing reveals his unusually high regard for himself. Lofty matters were clearly not always on his mind; his writing reveals to his readers many of his first-hand governmental experiences, as well as his second-hand knowledge of warfare. His life extended through a period of strife and war; his writings of these struggles reveal the duty he felt that he owed his country. Never, however, does he show that he put aside his main purpose, that of serving God. His ideas unveil his comprehensive and masterful view of the world.¹⁸ He utilizes in his Paradise Lost this wide range of information that he acquired from serving his country; in this way he felt that he was also doing his duty to God.

Milton's epic clearly discloses the extent of his personal knowledge. Traditional religious literature, from

¹⁶Morris Freedman, "Satan and Shaftesbury," PMLA, LXXIV (Dec., 1959), 544, 546.

¹⁷Theodore Howard Banks, Milton's Imagery (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 92.

¹⁸Arnold Sidney Stein, "Satan: The Dramatic Rôle of Evil," PMLA, LXV, Part 1 (Mar., 1950), 231.

which he drew most of his "ideas, themes, and episodes," supplies the "heart and nerves of" his most remembered work. In Paradise Lost Milton also utilizes information from "religious literature in general," from the classics, and from a wide range "of philosophy, geography, and history."¹⁹ Clearly his familiarity with such a wide mass of information surpassed that of the average reader of his time and exceeds that of most scholars today.

The "somewhat amorphous genre known as hexameral literature" which George C. Taylor, Maury T. de Maisieres, and Frank E. Robbins claim Milton's epic follows "in general scope and major divisions" can be defined as "the poems and treatises on the days of Creation, based primarily upon the first chapter of Genesis." This genre also includes the existing paraphrases of the other relevant chapters in Genesis, "together with similar expansions from other books of Scripture. . . ." ²⁰

The earliest traces of this genre are associated with Philo about A.D. 40. It grew "in popularity and diversity of treatment until some decades after 1600." "The second century brought the contributions of Candidus, Justin Martyr, and Rhodon; the third, those of Caius, Hippolytus, Methodius, and Origen." By the fourth century, hexamers were being written "which largely set the

¹⁹McColley, Sources, pp. 15-16.

²⁰Ibid., p. 3.

pattern for many subsequent works."²¹

The story of Adam and Eve "inspired some of the world's greatest masterpieces." The tale itself is believed to have begun "as a straightforward aetiological myth, designed to explain why a man cleaves to his wife and why he is the senior partner in the union, why he has to labour in the fields and she in childbirth, why we wear clothes, why we dislike snakes, and why they crawl on their bellies." Contrary to what is frequently implied, there is no clear-cut evidence in the sources behind the Bible, principally the hypothetical P and J documents, that the story was written to explain the presence of sin and human mortality. Many have found "key phrases" that may suggest such relationships, but these are questionable, as scholars have testified. Some, for example, argue that man was created mortal and that the tree of knowledge "referred only to premature death." Others say man was created potentially immortal, but he was, nevertheless, capable of choosing death.²²

The stories of scholars have led back to Babylonian mythology, where the creation of Enkidu in the Gilgamesh Epic may parallel the creation of Adam in the early Hebrew version of the Fall, although "Enkidu is not the first of his kind." At that time, apparently no association was

²¹Ibid., pp. 3-4.

²²J. M. Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press of the Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 9, 17.

made between Satan and the serpent, and Enkidu was understood to be mortal. Legendary elements like the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, and the serpent even then were a puzzle. Their assimilation into the structure is still not clear; obviously they are mythical relics from even earlier times.²³

Strangely, "nowhere in the Old Testament do we find any clear revelation about the fall of an angel," although clearly "there is imperfection inherent in every created thing. . . ." ²⁴ The fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, which has been transformed from ancient times by pious imagination, is frequently thought to be about "Satan's primordial conflict with his Creator, but. . . . the Old Testament Satan was no more than a kind of celestial prosecutor, whose function it was to test Man's virtue and accuse him when it was found wanting; nowhere is he portrayed as acting independently of, or contrary to, the wishes of God." ²⁵ The most complete story of the Fall in the centuries before the birth of Christ "is to be found in the Book of Jubilees (c. 153-105 B.C.), a Pharisaic work described by its most recent translator as an enlarged Targum of Genesis and Exodus 'in which difficulties in the Biblical narrative are solved, gaps supplied, dogmatically offensive elements

²³Ibid., pp. 15-16, 20.

²⁴A. Lefèvre, S.J., "Angel or Monster?" trans. by Hester Whitlock, Satan (New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1952), p. 60.

²⁵Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, p. 34.

removed, and the genuine spirit of later Judaism infused into the primitive history of the world."²⁶ The concept of a fallen angel is not clarified, but one of the problems this account solves concerns the serpent, which had previously been only a mysterious, clever creature in the story of the fall of man. In Jubilees it is suggested "that before the Fall all the animals enjoyed the gift of speech. . . ." ²⁷

"The next treatment of the subject, the Book of the Secrets of Enoch (c. 30 B.C.-A.D. 70), is the product of a totally different intellectual environment, of Hellenistic rather than Pharisaic Judaism." Nevertheless, it actually is very similar to those stories that came before, except that the prohibition and the tree of knowledge have disappeared entirely; instead, there is a "literal seduction of Eve by a fallen angel." This sudden appearance of a fallen angel can be traced to an earlier rival story which appeared in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch (c. 94-64 B.C.). In this legend "Watcher angels" fell because of their lustful behavior toward the "daughters of men." The leader of the Watchers was Satamail or Sotona. By misinterpreting the Isaiah story, "an ancient astral myth, based on the disappearance of Venus at the break of day, which has been used

²⁶Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, p. 30, citing R. H. Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphy of the Old Testament (1913), ii.1.

²⁷Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, p. 31.

. . . to illustrate the inevitability of Babylon's downfall," the author of the Secrets of Enoch added to the history of the devil by claiming that the tempter was the lustful Sotona, the leader of a band of fallen angels, who in turn became associated with the serpent.²⁸

This account was popular, for the most part; but "concupiscence as a motive for the reptile's hostility to Adam did not satisfy some Rabbis." These men decided that more likely the beast was simply envious of Man's happy state in Eden. They explained that the serpent "walked and talked like a man" before the Fall, an idea they obtained from Jubilees. Really their story represented probably no more than a "compromise between the Secrets of Enoch and Genesis."²⁹ The Jewish people did not apply the explanation completely to their doctrines, probably because of the "close relationship that has always existed between the supposition of a Fall and the expectation of a Messiah."³⁰

Christianity, on the other hand, emphasized the Fall and Redemption. Saint Paul was the first to relate the two; and they, thereby, took their particular place in Christian theology. Naturally many questioned the new religion with its Jewish background. One of the biggest

²⁸Ibid., pp. 31-34.

²⁹Ibid., p. 47.

³⁰Ibid., p. 59.

philosophical difficulties was "a perfect Creator with an imperfect Creation." As a result of unexplained matters, two dualistic sects, the Gnostics and the Manichees, arose. These groups reinterpreted the Christian beliefs. To them, Jahweh, whom they named as a subordinate to the Supreme Deity, was "neither omnipotent nor benevolent." He fashioned Man for "his own selfish ends and attempted to keep him in ignorance" of God by "forbidding him to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge." The tree and the serpent in their version were the elements favorable to the good of the first man and woman. By reversing the customary roles, the serpent became the hero; he was even preferred over Christ. Consequently, the Church was forced to defend the first three books of Genesis at all costs.³¹

An allegorical interpretation also existed. Really the followers of this branch began with Philo (c. 20 B.C.-c. A.D. 45), but other allegorists were Origen, Ambrose, and Augustine. Primarily, their approach was defensive; they resorted to versions of the Old Testament that openly attacked many of the old myths. Philo and his followers claimed that Man was "endowed with the knowledge of good and evil before the Fall," for they could not believe that God would have prevented Man from possessing knowledge. The serpent was to them a symbol of pleasure associated with the senses. The serpent's approach to the more

³¹Ibid., pp. 59-62.

aesthetic Eve, rather than to Adam, was clear to the allegorists as a result of this symbolism. By the time Augustine was doing his speculating, the serpent had become identified with the devil. Isidore of Seville (560-636) contributed further to the system of allegory by, for the first time, assigning "free will" as the symbolic meaning of the tree of knowledge. According to his explication, "the Devil deceives the carnal sense into persuading reason to abandon the will of God for its own desires, to eat, that is to say, of the forbidden fruit." Another allegorist, John Scotus Erigena (born c. 800-15), who was also dependent on Philo's basic interpretation, carried his views far astray from the others'. He surprisingly claimed Eve was created by God following a fall by Adam in a vision in which his soul descended to carnal pleasures.³² The use of visions will later be discussed as they are relevant to Milton's Paradise Lost.

Aside from the Christian views already mentioned, some attempted the difficult task of interpreting the Fall story literally. Such men as Simon Magus, Celsus, Latian, Justin Martyr, and Theophilus of Antioch claimed that God wanted man to reach a more mature state before acquiring knowledge of evil. Adam fell, they said, because he insisted upon "growing up too quickly." The fruit and tree of knowledge were not evil, but disobedience meant death. These Christian Fathers also invented an explanation concerning

³²Ibid., pp. 69-77.

the tempter that to them sounded less like a fable. Their contrived episode made Eve's assailant "an angel who was expelled from heaven after he persuaded her to eat the forbidden fruit." Once again envy was made the tempter's motive. Because of a few alterations, the literal interpretations differed from the rabbinic; the only major difference between the two schools of thought, however, was their areas of emphasis.³³

"Diverse as they were, all these analyses of the tempter's reasons for bringing about the Fall rested on the assumption that he was not cast down into Hell until he had succeeded in leading Adam and Eve astray." The theory that Lucifer had already fallen at the time of the temptation of man gradually emerged; but as late as the fifth century, religious leaders were having to remind Christians that the angel fell because of excessive pride; in other words, they claimed that Lucifer had already been cast out of heaven at the time of man's fall. They explained that he envied man's glorious state so much that he set out to cause his fall too.³⁴

Gregory of Nyssa (died 394) in his On the Baptism of Christ refined an old idea: "'And he, that evil charmer, framing his new device of sin against our race, drew along his serpent train, a disguise worthy of his own intent, entering in his impurity into what was like himself--dwelling

³³Ibid., pp. 78-81.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 82-83.

earthy and mundane as he was in will, in that creeping thing."³⁵ Augustine claimed in his On the City of God that the serpent was "'suitable for his [Satan's] purpose,"³⁶ and "he suggested that the serpent was the only beast Satan was allowed to use."³⁷ Incidentally, the serpentine disguise in Paradise Lost also indicates how low the archangel had fallen.

Moving to a more rich "missionary technique," the Christian-Latin poems which appeared during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries were frequently written about the Creation and the Fall. More than anything else, these works were simply endeavoring to make the story more enjoyable. They succeeded, and their success has been surpassed only by the author of Genesis B and Milton. At this point, it is worthy to note that these two authors had available to them many of the Christian-Latin works. Some of the better known are Centro of Valeria Faltonia Proba, Metrum in Genesim of Hilarius Arelatensis, Alethia of Claudius Marius Victor, Carmen de Deo of Blossius Aemilius Dracontius, Poematum de Mosaicae Historiae Gestis Libri Quinque of Alcimus Ecdicius

³⁵Ibid., p. 88, citing Gregory of Nyssa On the Baptism of Christ, trans. S.L.N.P.N.F., VII, 519.

³⁶Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, p. 95, citing Augustine On the City of God, trans. M. Dods, The Works of Aurelius Augustine (1871), I-II, 14.2.

³⁷Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, n. 5, p. 95, referring to Augustine Genesis According to the Letter, M.P.L., XXXIV, 11.27-29.

Avitus, and Heptateuchos of Cyprianus Gallus.³⁸

Following this age of Neo-Classical treatments of the story that had been told many times before came a period in the early Old English days when much Anglo-Saxon religious poetry was being written. The founder, "according to the venerable Bede (673-735)," of this religious movement was the English cowherd Caedmon, who wrote a brief hymn on the Creation. This eighth-century composition started the so-called "Caedmonian Revolution." Actually this movement was a continuation of one that began with the Christian-Latin poets; Caedmon is, however, the first English poet whose name is known.³⁹ Caedmon's Genesis, according to Henry Todd, is "'a Paradise Lost in rude miniature. It contains the fall of angels, the Creation, the temptation of Eve, and the expulsion from Paradise.'" Interestingly, during the period that Milton was writing his epic, Caedmon's poem was very popular in London.⁴⁰

This new movement in literature was different from any other. It was developed in a time of local warlords, loyal retainers, and warriors. The Christian terminology was modified by words with a foreign resonance, and spiritual aspects became "coarsened by the heroic emphasis on physical valor and material reward and punishment." To the Anglo-

³⁸Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, pp. 109-110.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 143-44.

⁴⁰McColley, Sources, p. 5.

Saxons, Heaven was an "idealized wine-hall, presided over by a warrior God and inhabited by angelic thanes. . . ." All of this, plus the essential code of allegiance, made Satan into the disobeyer of one of the "most respected" laws of the feudal society, loyalty to superiors.⁴¹

The heroic devil of the Old English Genesis B is commonly referred to also by scholars.⁴² The ninth-century Saxon poet handled the first transgression "with a breadth of imagination unequalled in this or any earlier period." He made many interesting and significant changes in the story's plot and characterization because he obviously knew what his readers expected. The Germanic influence, which is very clear in works like Beowulf and Waldere, prescribed a story with many stops and starts filled with author's comments or speeches from the characters themselves. This filler, in the case of the story of the celestial cycle, was expected to answer such questions as what happened and how it happened, who acted and why he acted--the questions Genesis "left unasked."⁴³

The author of Genesis B was, indeed, "unlike his

⁴¹Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, pp. 144-46.

⁴²Helen Gardner, "Appendix A: Milton's Satan and the Theme of Damnation in Elizabethan Tragedy," A Reading of "Paradise Lost" (Oxford: Clarendon Press of the Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 99. (Hereinafter, this work is called "Elizabethan Tragedy.")

⁴³Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, pp. 151-52, 155-56.

English predecessors, who had been content simply to overlay the original text with a veneer of heroic diction and imagery. . . ." As in Beowulf, a flashback technique is used; the poet reaches the "focal point of the story," God's command to Adam and Eve regarding the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and then shifts to his detailed explanation of Satan's hostility to man which was a result of his previous rebellion. Satan's "attempt to overthrow his Creator is pictured as a trusted retainer's attempt to supplant his lord and establish a rival hall. . . ."

After his fall to Hell, Satan is depicted as being securely chained; he is forced to appeal to the loyalty of those who fell with him, a concept he had just ignored, to gain assistance in his plan for revenge. The satanic warrior eventually is free, and he disguises himself as an angel for his confrontation with Adam and Eve. He tells them that God now wishes for them to eat the previously forbidden fruit. If they refuse, he warns them that punishment will result. Instead of a "moral enticement," the poem's predominant military tone is climaxed by a strategic maneuver. When Adam refuses to accept the "angel's" message, Satan confronts Eve. He appeals "not to Eve's loyalty to God but to her love for Adam." The irony of the situation is obvious; indeed, throughout the poem "there is a continual ironic contrast between the catastrophic nature of the deeds themselves and the goodness

of the motives which inspired them."⁴⁴

In the Middle Ages following the era of Genesis B, Peter Comestor produced an effective and characteristic Biblical commentary, Historia Scholastica. This composition presented a "readable paraphrase . . . filled out with legendary and theological amplifications, which could be enjoyed by the unlearned quite simply as a story." His Historia differed from others most specifically in his handling of Satan. He utilized the serpent, but he chose to use a snake that could walk and that had the face of a woman. He made this alteration in tradition because he felt that Eve would have listened more readily to another female.⁴⁵

With the Middle Ages came a large "concern for rationality." The author of Historia is "constantly preoccupied with demonstrating the reason, or, as a Middle-English author would say, the 'skille', for every little detail of the story." This new interest in logic evolved as a result of the fact that "paganism was no longer an active threat." Irreligion had become the greatest enemy of the Church. With this change, others were bound to come. No longer was God considered a powerful feudal lord and Christ a devoted warrior; God had become a judge,

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 156-63.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 168, 170.

and the warrior-Christ had become Christ the Advocate. The Biblical drama was no longer portrayed on a battlefield; a huge courtroom and technical judicial procedures were expected, for the people had responded to a change of their own. Their lives were influenced by codes of courtly love and chivalry. Satan's rebellion was a legal trespass rather than a military insurrection during this time of medieval interest in eloquent justice and logic.⁴⁶ For instance, Hugh of St. Victor presented the problem of salvation as a legal case:

'Were man, then, to have such an advocate that by his power the devil could be brought into court, man would justly speak against his dominion, since the devil had no just case for making a lawful claim on man. But no such advocate could be found save God alone. However, God was unwilling to take up man's case, because he was still angry at man for his sin. It was necessary, therefore, that man should first placate God, and thereafter, with God as his advocate, begin his suit against the devil.'⁴⁷

Prior commentators' emphasis on the sin of Adam had tended to minimize the guilt of Satan. The medieval people were far more sympathetic towards Man. They did not believe that the devil chose the serpent because it was the only animal he was allowed to use or because "its tortuous windings" best fit his perverted nature. They claimed that the lady's visage of the serpent made it the animal most likely to

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 172-75.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 175, citing Hugh of St. Victor On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith I.viii.4, in L.C.C. X (1956), 303-04.

deceive Eve, and for this reason it was Satan's choice.⁴⁸ Milton's Satan, who is similar and dissimilar to those already mentioned, will be presented in detail in a later chapter.

Many writers had tried to meet the difficulties of the gaps in the Story of Man, and their efforts were not unsuccessful. The many texts of the story provided a mere background, however, for dramatists who had to contend with a "spatial gulf between their audience and the events related in Genesis." Whereas writers could have answers and solutions implied, a dramatist had to have characters making answers and expressing feelings. Since "drama is essentially an art of the foreground," even minor inconsistencies were important. Dramatists were forced to invent speeches and incidents to meet the shortcomings of the historical information. Besides difficulties of the first type mentioned, the dramatist had to tackle the "cosmic scope of his material." If he began his tale with the traditional battle in Heaven, for instance, he had to face many problems that few medieval or Elizabethan theaters could handle, not to mention the most modern playhouses. Another type of problem a playwright had to face involved the legendary nakedness of Adam and Eve and the presence of a serpent who could talk and walk. Many

⁴⁸Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, pp. 172-76.

original handlings of the material emerged.⁴⁹

The anonymous Frenchman who wrote Mystère added stage directions which included instructions for Adam to wear a red tunic and Eve to wear a white robe and a white head covering. He also originally utilized a stage-prop serpent. An actor played the role of Satan and, therefore, made all necessary speeches; at the crucial moment, the actor disappeared and Eve remained to do all the talking. Rather than addressing the "serpent," she spoke to the forbidden fruit.⁵⁰ Milton uses this technique when he has Eve contemplating the "Virtues" of the fruit:

Great are thy Virtues, doubtless, best of Fruits,
Though kept from Man, and worthy to be admir'd,
Whose taste, too long forborne, at first assay
Gave elocution to the mute, and taught
The Tongue not made for Speech to speak thy praise: . . .
(ix.745-49)

The English playwrights handled the temptation scene differently. From the evidence available, it is highly likely that an actor dressed in a snake costume. In this manner, the rabbinic belief that the tempter walked upright was renewed. In Ludus Coventriae and the two sixteenth-century Norwich plays, it is obvious that Eve thought this ambiguous figure was an angelical being from heaven. Comestor's idea of a devil with a maiden's face was also utilized by some playwrights, in particular the writer of the Chester cycle.⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 192-95.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 194-95.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 195.

However, "the most memorable treatment of the Fall itself" is in the French Mystère. The devil promises to tell Eve a secret and immediately gains her full, curious attention. He acts as a chivalrous lover and attempts to persuade her that she is the traditional mal mariée. "She falls because she wishes to be not the equal of God but the mistress of her husband; he, because he wishes to prove his innate superiority to his wife." In Cornish plays there is an interesting parallel. Adam eats of the forbidden fruit to prove his valor but later insists he ate of it to prove his love. Chivalry is still an important ingredient in the Fall Story.⁵² As is obvious, the devil was often quite comical in the medieval drama.⁵³

The medieval dramatists left the Biblical playwrights of the Renaissance with a wealth of material and inventions. The internal development was complete; however, the structure and sequence still needed improving. A good drama was written in Latin in 1601 by Hugh Grotius entitled Adamus Exul. It was a five-act classical tragedy. J. M. Evans believes that it served as a structural model for Vondel's Adam in Ballingschap (1664) as well as Milton's Paradise Lost. The first act of Adamus Exul opens with a soliloquy by Satan who reveals his evil plans and his first up-close view of Paradise. A chorus is used by Grotius to fill in

⁵²Ibid., pp. 199-202.

⁵³Gardner, "Elizabethan Tragedy," p. 100.

the details of Lucifer's rebellion. In the fourth act, Eve is fascinated by Satan's reptilian disguise; previously, in the third act, Adam had refused to break God's commandment. However, Eve is convinced by the crafty serpent that all of God's creations are good and that the prohibition is a result of heavenly envy. In medieval plays God had always given a "running commentary on his own activities. . . ." Grotius, in contrast, successfully employs an untraditional angelic visitor to give the audience these same facts. Adam learns about the vastness of God's creations from this heaven-sent messenger.⁵⁴ Milton also makes use of a heavenly envoy to give Adam and Eve necessary information. God tells Raphael to go to the earth to advise His creatures of possible danger and to reveal to them facts about the universe. The Almighty says,

Raphael, . . . thou hear'st what stir on Earth
Satan from Hell scap't through the darksome Gulf
 Hath rais'd in Paradise, and how disturb'd
 This night the human pair, how he designs
 In them at once to ruin all mankind.
 Go therefore, half this day as friend with friend
 Converse with Adam, in what Bow'r or shade
 Thou find'st him from the heat of Noon retir'd, . . .
(v.224-31)

Milton did have an opportunity in the spring of 1638, while on a continental tour, personally to visit Grotius in Paris. However, according to Parker, a modern biographer of Milton, "it is too much to suppose that their talk turned to the great man's youthful tragedy, Adamus Exul, although

⁵⁴Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, pp. 207-12.

this experience may later have led Milton to read the work." Certainly Milton was impressed with the "jurist, theologian, philologist, and historian"; for Parker says that this visit "was an early fulfilment of one of Milton's ideals of travel."⁵⁵ No one will ever know the topics discussed by the two men, but it is known that Milton's earliest dramatic drafts about the Fall, which are preserved in the Trinity Manuscript, are roughly dated 1639 to 1642.⁵⁶

The first of the four drafts in this collection was begun on the heels of the personal visit with the creator of the "first genuinely dramatic play on the Fall of Man." This occurrence is perhaps coincidental; but, according to Evans, "the growing similarity observable between the successive drafts of Paradise Lost and the Dutch play can hardly be accidental."⁵⁷

J. M. Evans points out that Milton's first two dramatic drafts are only "lists of the dramatis personae." By the third draft a "discernible plan emerges" which utilizes allegorical characters. In the fourth draft, Milton has made many major changes--all of which "could have been inspired by Grotius's play."⁵⁸ Edward Phillips, a nephew and an occasional amanuensis of Milton, recalled

⁵⁵Parker, Milton: A Biography, p. 170.

⁵⁶Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, p. 212.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 212-13.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 213-14.

seeing a dramatic draft that began with a soliloquy by Satan, marking his first glimpse of Paradise.⁵⁹ If this somewhat unreliable testimony is believed, Milton must have begun a fifth play on the Fall that resembled Grotius's even more than his fourth draft.

At this point in the development of the plot and characters, it can be believed that Milton shifted to the epic form. Many have compared the five-act Adamus Exul and the 1667 ten-book Paradise Lost and have concluded that there are many similarities in content and in structure. Some have clearly shown how the epic poem can be divided "into five acts consisting of two books each."⁶⁰

Milton's story of the Fall is, however, unique, especially in the development of its Satan figure. The story is not new, but the original handling of a character who has been around since the earliest literature (and before!) makes Milton's tale more unified and more meaningful than earlier versions.

⁵⁹J. Milton French, ed., The Life Records of John Milton, Vol. II: 1639-1651 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1950), p. 51.

⁶⁰Evans, "Paradise Lost" and the Genesis Tradition, pp. 214-15.

CHAPTER II

MILTON'S SATAN: HIS CHARACTER, NATURE, AND STATURE

According to Steadman, the devil in Paradise Lost is "a liar and forger of illusions," just as he is in the Biblical image.¹ He is also "the continuous source of evil."² Milton knew that Aristotle had said that poets must make their characters consistent with fact. Aristotle in his On Poetics says that a poet should make his characters "like the reality" and "consistent."³ I feel that Milton's Satan remains very clearly a lying monomaniac throughout Paradise Lost. His Satan is part of the unity of the great epic poem. At no time can one truly trust the words of Satan.

Before his fall, Satan is the highest Seraph,

¹John M. Steadman, "Image and Idol: Satan and the Elements of Illusion in Paradise Lost," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LIX (Oct., 1960), 645. (Hereinafter, this work is referred to as "Image and Idol.")

²Roland Mushat Frye, God, Man, and Satan: Patterns of Christian Thought and Life in "Paradise Lost," "Pilgrim's Progress," and the Great Theologians (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 22. (Hereinafter, this work is referred to as God, Man, and Satan.)

³Aristotle On Poetics, translated by Ingram Bywater, Great Books of the Western World, Vol. IX: Aristotle II (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1955), p. 689.

one of "the most perfect creatures God has made."⁴ In Ezekiel 28:17 appear these words addressed to him: "Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour." Before Satan did this, he was "blameless," says Ezekiel.⁵ Ironically, as C. S. Lewis has pointed out, Satan really had not been mistreated. He was simply jealous of the Son of God. "No one had in fact done anything to Satan; he was not hungry, nor overtasked, nor removed from his place, nor shunned, nor hated--he only thought himself impaired."⁶ He fell when "He trusted to have equall'd the most High. . . ." (i.40). God says that He created Lucifer and all the other angels with the chance to "Persevere upright" (vii.632). In reference to the fallen Bearer of Light, God says, "I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (iii.98-99). Mankind, like Satan, has a free will. Although early in the epic God can foresee the fall of man, He states, "I form'd them free, and free they must remain. . . ." (iii.124).

Satan turns against his Creator. His words are repeated with amazement by the faithful angel Abdiel:

. . . unjust thou say'st
Flatly unjust, to bind with Laws the free,

⁴Walter Farrell, O.P., "The Devil Himself," Satan (New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1952), p. 10.

⁵Ezekiel 28:14-17. (R.S.V.)

⁶Lewis, A Preface to "Paradise Lost," p. 96.

And equal over equals to let Reign,
 One over all with unsucceeded power.
 Shalt thou give Law to God, shalt thou dispute
 With him the points of liberty, who made
 Thee what thou art, and form'd the Pow'rs of Heav'n
 Such as he pleas'd, and circumscrib'd thir being?
 (v.818-25)

Satan sternly reciprocates with

. . . who saw
 When this creation was? remember'st thou
 Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?
 We know no time when we were not as now;
 Know none before us, self-begot, self-rai'd
 By our own quick'ning power, . . .
 (v.856-61)

Although each had been told of his origin, Satan raises the point that what they know cannot be supported by witnesses. He insists that serving God is acceptable but that serving His Son too is against angels' basic natures, which are, according to Satan, "ordain'd to govern, not to serve" (v.802). With a convincing conglomeration of falsehoods, he gathers an army to attack the forces of the Almighty. Satan imagines that he can be victorious in a war between immortal beings. God patiently "limited thir might" (vi.229) to keep Heaven from being too disturbed. At a point when confusion seems to reign on the battlegrounds, God decides to use the situation to glorify His Son. He tells the Anointed One that by war "no solution will be found" (vi.694); He commands the Son:

Go then thou Mightiest in thy Father's might,
 Ascend my Chariot, guide the rapid Wheels
 That shake Heav'n's basis, . . .

Pursue these sons of Darkness, drive them out
 From all Heav'n's bounds into the utter Deep: . . .
 (vi.710-16)

Lucifer and his followers, indeed, are driven from Heaven by the Word of God. The Archangel becomes the Arch-fiend, "Confounded though immortal: . ." (i.53).

Obviously, Satan's love for himself, or his pride, led to his descent. He did not fall alone, however. According to most versions, one third of God's angels were ousted from Heaven to Hell with him. He caused these other angels to err because of his dictatorial behavior. Tillyard has stated that obviously Milton meant Satan as a sample of the dictator-type. If this is taken to be true, it is clear, says Tillyard, why Milton had to make him seem capable of as much good as bad, for "we now know . . . that to be greatly bad a man must have correspondingly great potentialities for good."⁷

Upon regaining his senses following his banishment from Heaven, Satan immediately begins building up the courage of the fallen group. He refuses to admit defeat; he insists to the weary ears of the others that they can seek revenge by thwarting all good. He declares:

To do aught good never will be our task,
 But ever to do ill our sole delight,
 As being the contrary to his high will
 Whom we resist.
 (i.159-62)

⁷E. M. W. Tillyard, Studies in Milton (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 6.

So, the group who did not want to serve are led into subservience by one who claims in one breath to be a peer and a leader, one who seems content rather "to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n" (1.263).

Ironically, while seeking to do evil, this wicked crew is actually doing good; for the epic voice in Paradise Lost reveals that

. . . all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.
(1.212-20)

Part of the goodness inadvertently brought about by the rebellion in Heaven is the creation of earth and man. Raphael, a messenger from God, reveals this truth to Adam and Eve in Book Seven. He tells how the loyal angels sing of man's homeland as "another Heav'n / From Heaven Gate not far, . . ." (vii.617-18).

Perhaps, because Satan is completely evil and potentially good, he is the most ambiguous and, therefore, the most interesting character in Paradise Lost. Even "Satan's vision of himself is not steady."⁸ He admits that he "seduc'd with . . . promises and . . . vaunts" (iv.83-84) his followers. He realizes that he rebelled

⁸Arnold Sidney Stein, Answerable Style: Essays on "Paradise Lost" (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1953), p. 5.

with "no legitimate reason."⁹ At one point he wants to relapse into time and forget what he must suffer forever. His only salvation becomes an illusion; the great artificer lowers himself to the level of almost a comic character when he tries to convince himself that he believes his own lies. For example, Satan tells his followers in Hell,

. . . From this descent
 Celestial Virtues rising, will appear
 More glorious and more dread than from no fall
 And trust themselves to fear no second fate: . . .
 (ii.14-17)

But as he approaches Paradise for the first time, the epic voice reveals his inner thoughts:

. . . horror and doubt distract
 His troubl'd thoughts, and from the bottom stir
 The Hell within him, for within him Hell
 He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
 One step no more than from himself can fly
 By change of place: Now conscience wakes despair
 That slumber'd, wakes the bitter memory
 Of what he was, what is, and what must be
 Worse; of worse deeds worse sufferings must ensue.
 (iv.18-26)

Even when he quasi-realizes the mistake his ambition has caused him to make, he refuses to admit his error in front of the other fallen angels. Always when he is making a public appearance, he is courageous and influential; only when he is alone does he seem to doubt his rebellion, the plan for revenge, and his place in God's order. He instinctively seems to know that he has not yet reached the abyss of Hell; naturally only to himself does he admit

⁹Robert C. Fox, "Satan's Triad of Vices," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, II (Spring, 1960-Winter, 1961), 264.

Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
 And in the lowest deep a lower deep
 Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
 To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.
 (iv.75-78)

When around others, the Prince of Darkness wears--unknown to himself--a figurative mask that keeps the truth hidden. Whenever he is alone, however, he can almost see through his self-deceiving lies, but he speculates that repentance is impossible for him since he has fallen so low.

Satan and his followers fell, but they are nonetheless angels. God does not make them break away from the "good angels." By their own choice, they exert the freedom given them; and after a farcical war, the vainglorious host are escorted by the Son to a gap in the depths of Heaven opened especially for their fall to "the house of woe and pain" (vii.877). Still they retain life and some attributes of their former state. This is precisely the view held by Milton. His angels are described very vaguely--usually through metaphors and allusions. Nevertheless, one can determine Milton's angelology.

Harris Fletcher observes,

The sources on which Milton drew for his Angelology were primarily Christian and scholastic. For the most part, his system, with its rather vague outlines, and its individual members are conventional in substance and treatment.¹⁰

Some of his angels' names come from early stories of the Fall, but others he creates or pulls from a list of pagan

¹⁰Harris Francis Fletcher, Milton's Rabbinical Readings (1930; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, 1967), p. 212.

gods. Regardless of the source from which the names come, not all of his angels fit into the hierarchy he prescribes. Satan, of course, can be placed into the hierarchy, but some of the others' stations in relationship to one another are difficult to identify.

Also it is known that Milton personally believed "that matter is real and that there is no sharp distinction between spirit and matter, the one passing insensibly into the other; and . . . that the natural functions of the body are not something shameful and unworthy." Milton has Raphael, a messenger angel from Heaven, tell Adam and Eve that all beings created by God are arranged by Him into a perfect order. All creatures differ "only in degree."¹¹

Up and down in this hierarchy of beings, Milton's angels seem to fluctuate. Fletcher cites instances when the angels seem to be both spiritual and corporeal.¹² Seeming to refer, for example, to a tangible body, Raphael tells Adam that angels do eat; in Heaven, he explains,

Tables are set, and on a sudden pil'd
With Angels' Food, and rubied Nectar flows;
In Pearl, in Diamond, and massy Gold,
Fruit of delicious Vines, the growth of Heav'n.
(v.632-35)

On the other hand, when Adam asks him if angels make love, he answers,

¹¹Hanford, A Milton Handbook, pp. 204-05.

¹²Fletcher, Milton's Rabbinical Readings, p. 217.

Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
 (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
 In eminence, and obstacle find none
 Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars:
 Easier than Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,
 Total they mix, . . .
 (viii.622-27)

The exact nature--if not the capability--of Milton's angels remains unclear, for the most part.

The real appearance of one of his angels is also not made very clear in Paradise Lost. One fact is certain: Milton intends for the reader to visualize a winged figure surrounded by a halo of burning light. He has Satan describe Uriel, the angel whom God placed on the sun, as one whose "brightness" was not hidden even when his back was turned; even from a distance one can see

Of beaming sunny Rays, a golden tiar
 Circl'd his Head, nor less his Locks behind
 Illustrious on his Shoulders fledge with wings
 Lay waving round; . . .
 (iii.625-28)

Raphael is described by Adam as seeming to be "another Morn / Ris'n on mid-noon; . ." (v.310-11). Like the Seraph in Isaiah 6:2, Raphael is depicted with six wings:

. . . the pair that clad
 Each shoulder broad, came mantling o'er his breast
 With regal Ornament; the middle pair
 Girt like a Starry Zone his waist, and round
 Skirted his loins and thighs with downy Gold
 And colors dipt in Heav'n; the third his feet
 Shadow'd from either heel with feather'd mail
 Sky-tinctur'd grain.
 (v.278-85)

The actual size of the heavenly inhabitants is also a matter of frequent disagreement that is related to their appearance. Steadman claims that Milton's reference to

"the Giant Angels" (vii.605) is a direct indication of influence from "classical mythology" or "Renaissance demonology." He says that Milton may have also had in mind the word Nephilim, which appears in Genesis 6:4 and Numbers 13:33 and comes from a root meaning falling or assailing. This word also has the dual meaning of giants and fallen angels.¹³ If the Biblical reference is what Milton had in mind, he is possibly saying that his angels are literally very large.

West, however, asserts that Milton could have had in mind a Hebrew scriptural analogue. If so, he may have meant that his angels simply had a large "disposition of mind, which is always ascribed to giants, namely a proud, fierce, and aspiring temper." West does not say that Milton was not influenced by the Bible and Greek mythology when he called his angels "giant."¹⁴ After all, who can say what a man of Milton's breadth was thinking when he designed his angels? Clearly, Milton's allusions to the Titans and gods prove his familiarity with their stories. Perhaps the fact that he knew that others also were familiar with these stories is the reason he alludes to them at all.

Obviously Steadman and West differ slightly in their interpretations of the term "Giant Angels" in Book

¹³John M. Steadman, "Milton's 'Giant Angels': An Additional Parallel," Modern Language Notes, LXXV (Nov., 1960), 551-53.

¹⁴R. H. West, "Milton's 'Giant Angels,'" Modern Language Notes, LXVII (Jan., 1952), 22.

Seven of Paradise Lost. These words appear in a song of praise being sung to God by some adoring angels following His creation of the universe. They sing,

. . . greater now in thy return
 Than from the Giant Angels; thee that day
 Thy Thunders magnifi'd; but to create
 Is greater than created to destroy.
 (vii.604-07)

The "return" is, of course, the result of an action. Here, this word is used to mean accomplishments. The angels are more pleased with His acts of creation than His acts of destruction during the final moments of the War in Heaven, although the reader learns in Book Six that God directed His Son "Not to destroy" (vi.855) with the thunder. All of God's acts are greater, they sing, than any of the rebel angels'.

The words "Giant Angels" seem to carry in Paradise Lost and Genesis the same connotation of destruction. The Titan warriors of classical mythology are large and vicious; they throw mountains during battle, according to the legends, just as Satan and his hateful crew do in their attacks in Heaven (vi.663). When thinking of acts of violence, one thinks of physical factors certainly before mental determinants. For this reason, plus Milton's consistent use of the imagery of size, I feel the angels in Paradise Lost probably were physically very large, as were the Titans. True, pride and a certain aspiration of mind led to Satan's behavior; but during a period of violence surely Milton

wants his reader to visualize powerful warriors instead of vain and temperamental antagonists.

The structure of Milton's angels appears as another area skipped over quickly except in relation to the over-all plan, which is most important to Paradise Lost as a whole, for the degression of Satan. In a series of images, Satan is seen to fall lower and lower. "It is a kind of counterpoint, the inner diminishing of Satan played against the increasing magnitude of the theft."¹⁵ In Heaven the rebellious angel is at his largest. Indeed, all the angels in Heaven are compared to "planetary and celestial bodies; they use mountains for weapons."¹⁶ The shields of the mighty Michael and Satan look like "two broad Suns" (vi.305) as they face each other in battle.

After Satan's vain attempt in the War in Heaven, Milton indicates that all the fallen angels changed somewhat in appearance. Milton certainly was familiar with "the generally accepted belief that angels had a body of subtle fire and demons a body of 'dark' or 'thick' air. . . ." It was also believed that fire was superior to air; an angel's failure to have a fiery body in literature and art in various eras was a clear sign that he had fallen and that

¹⁵Stein, "Satan: The Dramatic Rôle of Evil," 229-30.

¹⁶Frank Sullivan Kastor, "'In His Own Shape': The Structure of Satan in Paradise Lost," English Language Notes, V (June, 1968), 266.

he was being punished.¹⁷

As Steadman says, " . . . the convention of demonic disfigurement was an old one, and the belief that Lucifer and his companions forfeited their beauty with their allegiance--that their transition from angels to fiends entailed a corresponding debasement in form--had been a recurrent theme in medieval and Renaissance art and literature.¹⁸ Milton is following a conventional pattern when he reveals that his fallen angels have suffered alterations in their physical appearances; for Satan the alteration turns out to be only one stage in his gradual degeneration. Satan's appearance continues to change between Books One and Ten. This gradual decline in spiritual and physical nature is original with Milton.

Reviewing that exclamation which begins with line eighty-four of Book One, the devil first addresses his "bold Compeer" (l.127) Beelzebub. His words are the first indication that Milton intends to punish his angels conventionally. Satan says,

If thou beest hee; But O how fall'n! how chang'd
From him, who in the happy Realms of Light
Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst outshine
Myriads though bright: . . .
(l.84-87)

¹⁷Henri-Irénée Marrou, "The Fallen Angel," trans. by Hester Whitlock, Satan (New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1952), p. 77.

¹⁸John M. Steadman, "Archangel to Devil: The Background of Satan's Metamorphosis," Modern Language Quarterly, XXI (Dec., 1960), 321.

At this point in the narrative, the reader learns that Satan has noticed his own change in appearance. In a rousing exhortation to Beelzebub he declares his unshaken views:

. . . yet not for those,
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though changed in outward luster; . . .
(1.94-97)

At first glance, one may not notice that the size of the fallen host has also changed. For Milton describes Satan as he is lying on the fiery lake of Hell in this way:

Thus Satan talking to his nearest Mate
With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the Den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream:

So strecht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay. . . .
(1.192-209)

Huge though he is, no longer is the arch-artificer described in cosmic terms. All references to his size indicate he is consistently massive; but in Books One and Two, never once is he like a planet as he and the others were in Heaven. Later, after the successful temptation of Eve, Satan momentarily is a comet or like a comet, but this is an exception and is as brief as his glory.

Satan is like the Titan Briareos or Typhon or Leviathan after landing in the mass of fire. Briareos

recalls the "powerful, hundred-armed Titan who flashed fire from a hundred mouths." Typhon is remembered in legends as a creature who had a hundred serpents' heads with fiery eyes. And Leviathan is the Biblical whale who has been called "'that crooked serpent' in Isaiah."¹⁹ By Milton, Leviathan is granted a "scaly rind" (l.206), which fits the serpentine image.

When Satan is permitted to leave the fiery lake by the will of God, the flight of the fallen host is compared to a volcano:

. . . as when the force
Of subterranean wind transplants a Hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
Of thund'ring Aetna, whose combustible
And fuell'd entrails thence conceiving Fire,
Sublim'd with Mineral fury, aid the Winds,
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
With stench and smoke: Such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet.
(l.230-38)

The shield and spear of the devil are large at this point, but they have been larger in Heaven. His shield as it hangs on his shoulders is "massy, large and round," resembling "the Moon," but no longer a sun. His spear, which he carries as if it were a wand, is equivalent to "the tallest Pine" in size (l.284-98).

Following his fall, the devil in Paradise Lost is apparently still an angel. Zephon in Book Four tells him

¹⁹Jonathan H. Collett, "Milton's Use of Classical Mythology in Paradise Lost," PMLA, LXXXV, No. 1 (Jan., 1970), 89-90.

that he barely recognizes him, however, because of his darker hue. The heaven-sent protector of Adam and Eve says to him,

Think not, revolted Spirit, thy shape the same,
Or undiminish'd brightness, to be known
As when thou stood'st in Heav'n upright and pure;
That Glory then, when thou no more wast good,
Departed from thee, and thou resembl'st now
Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul.
(iv.835-40)

Milton's presentation is founded in the Neoplatonic theory which stated that Lucifer's body "lost its light and beauty after his rebellion and became dark, gross, ugly, and sensitive to pain."²⁰ Never does Milton indicate that his towering demon, except when disguised, is physically a monster or serpent until after man's fall. The poet says that the arch-enemy still resembles his former self, although he now is synonymous with disaster:

. . . his form had yet not lost
All her Original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than Arch-Angel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of Glory obscur'd: As when the Sun new ris'n
Looks through the Horizontal misty Air
Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon
In dim Eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the Nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes Monarchs.
(i.591-99)

In Revelation 12:7-9, the War in Heaven is contrastingly explained in this manner:

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the

²⁰Steadman, "Archangel to Devil: The Background of Satan's Metamorphosis," 322.

deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.²¹

Probably from this passage, Romanesque and Renaissance painters derived their idea that Satan suffered a complete metamorphosis "at the time of his fall or, at latest, before his temptation of Eve."²² Even today we see the diabolical Ol' Scratch depicted as a monstrous creature with horns, pitchfork, and long pointed tail, which is very possibly a result of the same tradition. In the painting "De Engelenval," by Floris de Vriendt, Satan is shown as a dragon with seven heads. In Andreini's history, L'Adamo, "the fallen rebels have already" been changed in form, as in Vondel's version of the fall in which Satan had become a combination of seven ugly beasts which represent the seven deadly sins. Valvasone has all the rebel angels before the battle in Heaven lose their "pristine shapes" in his L'Angeleida. They become "Harpies, Gorgons, Sphinxes, Hydras, Minotaurs, Centaurs, Chimeras, birds of ill-omen, satyrs, sea beasts, and other monsters." Valmarana, on the other hand, in his Daemonomachia presents Lucifer's metamorphosis in "two phases." During the preliminaries of battle, Satan sprouts horns; and "in the ensuing conflict with Michael, the two-edged sword of the Word of God" eliminates his "remaining beauty." One of the "rare

²¹Rev. 12:7-9. (R.S.V.)

²²Steadman, "Archangel to Devil: The Background of Satan's Metamorphosis," 330.

exceptions" to the conventional treatments of this subject is a picture by Lorenzo Lotto entitled "St. Michael Pursuing Lucifer," which shows Lucifer falling to hell as a beautiful angel.²³

Milton's Neoplatonic Satan, although perhaps not the one of his personal belief, best fits his plan of organization for Paradise Lost. Instead of having Satan in his lowest form before his temptation of Eve, Milton allows his Satan to continue throughout the epic the degenerating course begun in Heaven. In this way, the devil's transformation is presented "in a new light"; it becomes, instead of a punishment for rebelling, a punishment for seducing mankind. Steadman claims the fall in Paradise Lost occurs in three stages: "(1) a grossness of texture as early as the angelic war; (2) the partial obscuration of his brightness with his fall; and finally (3) his transformation into a serpent at the conclusion of his enterprise against man."²⁴

As Milton's Satan becomes closer to his second and final "fall," he is metaphorically viewed as becoming more evil and more mundane. The gradual descent of the devil and Milton's partial reliance on precedents for his original interpretations of the changes are matters next to be taken up in detail.

²³Ibid., 330-33.

²⁴Ibid., 333, 335.

CHAPTER III

THE GRADUAL DEGRADATION

Milton links through his use of proleptic imagery the slow spiritual changes that occur in Satan, changes which lead to the seduction of man. Collett says that "each image" contributes "to the anticipation of the major events of the poem and every moment" contains "some knowledge of all moments. . . ." He quotes Christopher Ricks' assertion: "'Prolepsis is surely the key-figure throughout Paradise Lost, in the fable itself, in allusion, in simile, and even in syntax and word-play.'"¹

Milton utilizes the Doctrine of Accommodation for the reader in the same way that the good angel Raphael does when he speaks of Heaven to Adam:

. . . what surmounts the reach
Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
By lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms,
As may express them best, though what if Earth
Be but the shadow of heav'n, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?
(v.571-76)

The angel is telling Adam that he will discuss Heaven and heavenly affairs in terms that will mean more to him. Because

¹Collett, "Milton's Use of Classical Mythology in Paradise Lost," 88.

the literal truth is beyond human comprehension, he plans to use relevant truth. Raphael explains his purpose in Book Six:

Thus measuring things in Heav'n by things on Earth
At thy request, and that thou mayst beware
By what is past, to thee I have reveal'd
What might have else to human Race been hid: . . .
(vi.893-96)

Thomas Aquinas, as well as Calvin and other reformers, used this method for interpreting scripture.² Calvin says in his Theological Treatises, "'We need symbols or mirrors to exhibit to us the appearance of spiritual and heavenly things in a kind of earthly way.'"³ Frye elaborates further by explaining that "a one-to-one equation between the Christian symbol and its referent is not to be expected." For instance, Frye summarizes by saying that "the fires and other torments of hell are metaphors representing the anguish of chosen isolation from God."⁴ John Knox, a twentieth-century theologian, further explains the Doctrine of Accommodation as "'falsification at one level for the sake of truth at another, infidelity to fact for the sake of fidelity to meaning.'"⁵

²Frye, God, Man, and Satan, p. 9.

³Ibid., pp. 9-10, citing John Calvin, Theological Treatises, trans. and ed. by J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 131.

⁴Frye, God, Man, and Satan, pp. 10, 40.

⁵Ibid., pp. 11-12, citing John Knox, On the Meaning of Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 66.

What looks like power, for instance, in the character Satan is really part of his complex highly-good and highly-bad personality. Lefèvre tells us that the "power of evil is powerlessness."⁶ Satan acts brave in front of his followers; when the fallen angels decide to explore the new planet, characteristically he volunteers to go alone. He vainly confides to the group,

But I should ill become this Throne, O Peers,
And this Imperial Sov'ranty, adorn'd
With splendor, arm'd with power, if aught propos'd
And judg'd of public moment, in the shape
Of difficulty or danger could deter
Mee from attempting.
(11.445-50)

In the same breath, he claims the others as his peers and also as his subjects!

Lewis has said that Milton's Satan is consistently "more a Lie than a Liar, a personified self-contradiction."⁷ He frequently resorts to "false or exaggerated claims, pretensions, and boasts." One can only speculate about the number of deliberate deceptions; at times one can easily assume that he is the victim of his own illusions. One of his pretensions is to "divine honors" and to "regal status." Although the fallen angels later would be worshipped as pagan gods, according to Milton's story, they never would be free to control their destinies, for always their liberty would be controlled by their Creator. "God

⁶Lefèvre, "Angel or Monster?" p. 66.

⁷Lewis, A Preface to "Paradise Lost," p. 97.

continued to reign supreme in Hell as in Heaven, and the assertion of independence was little more than a boast."⁸

Satan's claim to heroic virtue also "entailed the inherent absurdities of an ethical and political order based on the pursuit of evil." His "infernally society" with its spoken constitution "involved fallacies which should have been obvious to any reader of Aristotle's Politics." Namely, a true state's aim is to produce happiness, to orient toward peace, and to pursue liberties for all. The government of Hell had what equalled a "well-ordered" state in appearance, but in actuality only "spiritual confusion" was involved.⁹

Satan leads his followers into misery valiantly; he places them in a position of eternal alert knowingly; and he substitutes one form of servitude for another schemingly. All of Satan's pretenses are based on an inverted order. The cornerstone of his established moral and political system is even a contradiction--"Evil be thou my Good" (iv.110). He literally is the heroic leader of the Underworld, the only place his character is praised.

In Hell he reigns as the "Idol of Majesty Divine" (vi.101), and there "he accomplishes his own unfulfillment" as he strives to equal God in power. The whole satanic predicament is ironical. He falls out of his place in the

⁸Steadman, "Image and Idol," 646.

⁹Ibid., 647.

order of nature, thinking he can act independently of God. Too late for repentance, Satan discovers that he "cannot attack creation without damaging himself." He "becomes a slave to what would, psychologically, be called an 'ego-ideal,' a substitute or ersatz self, an identification of the self with an impossible image." He describes the frustration he feels as an ever-present sense of "torment" (ix.121). Milton's Satan learns what he seems always to have known by instinct--that the "repudiation of divine love" results in fragmentation and decay of "all personal integrity."¹⁰ With his self-love decreased, he finds he can still do evil, for the sake of his new "public" (iv.389). Satan tries to believe his own words:

. . . public reason just,
Honor and Empire with revenge enlarg'd,
By conquering this new World, compels me now
To do what else though damn'd I should abhor.
(iv.389-92)

By dedicating himself to "all-inclusive" hate, Satan becomes the opposite of, and the worst enemy of, Christ, the Son of God. The Devil, or as he is sometimes called, Antichrist, exiles all love and consequently himself by his efforts to reveal "his limited power." Christ, on the other hand, "sets aside his infinite power in order to express his love" for mankind. One represents hate and death while the other incorporates completely all love and life. In contrast to divine love, Satan offers man "immortal

¹⁰Frye, God, Man, and Satan, pp. 27, 30, 35, 41.

hate" (i.107). He "curses the love of God and then proceeds to curse himself . . . , for his hatred of others is inextricably involved with the hatred of himself."¹¹ Christ humbly lowers Himself to save others from a fate like Satan's, but the fallen angel vainly and pitifully talks of attempts to "re-ascend / Self-rais'd" (i.633-34). Ironically, so much of what the devil says is just talk; for although he is permitted by the Almighty to roam freely, he can never escape the pains of Hell; he discovers that there is a literal and a mental hell. For Hell "always in him burns, / Though in mid Heav'n" (ix.467-68). When he says rhetorically to the other fallen angels, "Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n" (i.330), he is setting the stage for his ultimate, unavoidable fall. He, after a dramatic, momentary pause, chooses later in the story to take the form of a serpent to seduce Eve; and this animal becomes his form of incarnation. Compared to Christ's willing change for humanity, Satan's change is obviously low and gross. Mother Mary Christopher writes that "the specific paralleling of Christ's ascent-through-descent with Satan's further-descent-through-descent seems to be the product of Milton's unique genius for synthesis."¹²

The Satan of Paradise Lost, the "counterfeit messiah dedicated to the betrayal of man," is a symbol as

¹¹Ibid., pp. 31-32.

¹²Mary Christopher Pecheux, O.S.U., "'O Foul Descent': Satan and the Serpent Form," Studies in Philology, LXII (April, 1965), 195.

he was in other Christian writings. Some easily accept the devil as a personality, whereas others see him only as representing all evil in the world. Regardless of one's personal interpretation of this notorious figure, the symbolism associated with Satan or Devil is always the same. He serves as "an interpretation of a certain type of life, a type which is always present as an open alternative for man, and of the relation which it produces between Creator and creature on one level, and between creature and creature on another." Milton's treatment of the figure is a "commentary on life, on human frustration and fulfillment."¹³

In this treatment of Satan, he uniquely makes the Antichrist self-destructive. Burkhart has stated, "Satan's self-destructiveness is symbolized by the shapes he assumes."¹⁴ Milton utilizes in his epics, Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, the generally accepted belief that demons can and do take any form they desire. In the Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels, for instance, by one of Milton's contemporaries, Satan is described as having the potential to fashion himself into any number of shapes. In the same work, Hell is said to be filled "with snakes and toads."¹⁵

¹³Frye, God, Man, and Satan, pp. 24-25.

¹⁴Marian Seldin Burkhart, John Milton's "Paradise Lost" (New York: Monarch Press, a Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1963), p. 61.

¹⁵McColley, Sources, pp. 162-63.

Other compositions tell of devils scaring and attempting to lead astray human beings, especially ones with strong religious beliefs, by pretending to be everything from women to monsters.¹⁶

To acquaint readers with the situation of the newly fallen group of angels, the epic poet makes several very good comparisons. In two separate sets of similes, one can visualize the "Legions" (i.301) that Satan sees as he first escapes the flaming lake where he had landed after his nine-day fall from Heaven. In the first set of similes, they are described as "Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks" (i.302), as "scatter'd sedge / Afloat" (i.304-05), and as "floating Carcasses" (i.310), before they begin to lift their limp shapes from the lake of fire.

Each of these similes refers to the "Cherub and Seraph rolling in the Flood / With scatter'd Arms and Ensigns, . ." (i.324-25). All images are borrowed, but the poet re-applies them. For example, in literature there have been many instances of fallen leaves. In Isaiah, many lines refer to the withering of foliage, high winds, and tossing seas to which Milton may have been alluding: Isaiah 15:6-7, 34:4, 40:8, 41:16, 57:20, and 64:6. According to Steadman, both the reference to darkened leaves and the reference to sedge probably are rooted in Christian tradition.¹⁷ Hughes suggests that the poet may

¹⁶Marrou, "The Fallen Angel," p. 77.

¹⁷John M. Steadman, "The Devil and Pharaoh's Chivalry," Modern Language Notes, LXXV (Mar., 1960), 198-99.

have been recalling the Dantean spirits which were "numberless as leaves" or a personal memory of a shadow-filled valley in Florence.¹⁸ The bodies and broken wheels clearly are a reference to Exodus 14 and 15. Steadman says that "commentators . . . had likened the destruction of the Egyptian army to the punishment of the rebel angels, the Red Sea to the fiery lake of Hell, and Pharaoh himself to Lucifer." What has traditionally been tied into the expectation of the Last Judgment, Milton relates instead to the fall--a type of judgment--taken by one third of the angels from Heaven.¹⁹

The second series of comparisons helps the reader to visualize the group of fallen angels who are reacting to Satan's command for them to rise and to recognize the significance of their new state. The poet uses similes of awakening sentries, locusts, and barbarians from the North. As the darkened angels lift their drowsy shapes from the burning lake, they fear as all soldiers must fear who are caught napping on duty. These words appear in Paradise Lost:

. . . as when men wont to watch
On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,
Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.
(1.332-34)

The jerky movements of the black mass the poet compares to "a pitchy cloud / Of Locusts, warping on the Eastern Wing, . . ." (1.340-41). This simile, according to Whaler,

¹⁸Milton, Paradise Lost, n. 302-04, p. 219.

¹⁹Steadman, "The Devil and Pharaoh's Chivalry," 198-200.

is "richer" than any locust simile in Homer or in the Bible; certainly locusts are not unfamiliar to scholars. Steadman claims that Milton's fallen angels are really very similar to locusts. They "possess the quality of imminent pestilence to earthly human life"; they are restless; also, as locusts, they are found in mass.²⁰ The image of the invading barbarians recalls the Christian tradition that Satan and his followers led their offense in Heaven from the North:

. . . at last
 Far in th' Horizon to the North appear'd
 From skirt to skirt a fiery Region, stretcht
 In battailous aspect, and nearer view
 Bristl'd with upright beams innumerable
 Of rigid Spears, and Helmets throng'd, and Shields
 Various, with boastful Argument portray'd,
 The banded Powers of Satan hasting on
 With furious expedition; . . .
 (vi.78-86)

The heavenly rebels were filled with barbarous qualities as they re-entered the central portion of Heaven. Like the locust image, this one takes into consideration the destructiveness, massiveness, and movement of the defeated host.

Other characteristics of the rebels are emphasized as well when the fallen angels are compared to a swarm of bees as they prepare to enter their newly constructed seat of government (i. 768-76). Because there are so many angels and because Pandemonium, although very large, will not hold all of them at once, all the spirits, except the greatest

²⁰James Whaler, "Animal Simile in Paradise Lost," PMLA, XLVII (June, 1932), 543.

"Seraphic Lords and Cherubim" (1.794), decrease their monstrous proportions to a fraction of their original:

So thick the aery crowd
Swarm'd and were strait'n'd; till the Signal giv'n,
Behold a wonder! they but now who seem'd
In bigness to surpass Earth's Giant Sons
Now less than smallest Dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that Pigmean Race
Beyond the Indian Mount, or Faery Elves, . . .
(1.775-81)

Before this change, however, the angels are described as

Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,
Brusht with the hiss of rustling wings.
(1.767-68)

The bee simile is not original with Milton; it appears, as do others of Milton, in works of classical epic poets and in the Book of Judges. Its history in epic literature can be traced all the way back to Homer, " . . . who compares the Achaian warriors, flocking forth in bands from the Greek encampment to hear what decisions their chieftains have reached in council, to bees issuing in tribes from a hollow rock." There is evidence that suggests that most of Milton's contemporary readers would have known the background of this allusion. Harding says, "Milton wanted his readers to recognize the source of his allusion so that they could compare his version with the original and then judge for themselves how skillfully, and with what new creative insights, he had reworked it." The bee simile in Paradise Lost is an obvious rehandling of Homer's with some Virgilian influence.²¹

²¹Davis P. Harding, "Milton's Bee-Simile," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LX (Oct., 1961), 664-66.

Most noteworthy of all, however, is the unusual complexity of the symbol as it is used by Milton. Satan and the other bad angels literally share some characteristics with a swarm of bees. Whaler writes, " . . . Milton is the first to liken a whole commonwealth of winged spirits to the whole polity of a hive." After he succeeds in directing the reader's eye by means of the bee simile to winged creatures of the very size that the spirits are to become, he shows the demons carrying out their governmental business exactly as human beings have always imagined bees to do.²² By this means, Milton manages to divert some attention from the personal activities of Satan. According to Huntley, Satan is restored "with a note of pastoral tranquillity," and the reader is able for the first time to identify the Artificer of Fraud as "a natural phenomenon created by God for the world's good," just as bees were. However, one then can see how different the two really are, for the simile places fecundity and death directly beside each other for comparison.²³ Milton's simile "engages the ear fully as much as it does the eye." The reader can "hear the rustling of innumerable wings and the busy humming, which is like the low murmur of statesmen sharing their views in an antechamber before some high

²²Whaler, "Animal Simile in Paradise Lost," 551.

²³John F. Huntley, "The Ecology and Anatomy of Criticism: Milton's Sonnet 19 and the Bee Simile in Paradise Lost, I, 768-776," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXIV (Fall, 1965-Summer, 1966), 388.

conference gets under way." This technique is obvious in the s's of Book One, line 768, with which Milton reinforces his point.²⁴

At the "high conference" held in Pandemonium, Satan heroically volunteers to travel through personified Chaos to reach earth. The darkened angel "Puts on swift wings" (ii.631) as he moves toward the Gates of Hell and his distant destination--the earth. Following a trip through Chaos, he comes as close to Heaven as a fallen angel is permitted; then he nears the "golden Sun in splendor likest Heaven" (iii.572). There on the sun he sees the archangel Uriel and decides to ask him for information that will guide him "To Paradise the happy seat of Man" (iii.632).

Before he can approach Uriel, Satan knows he must change his appearance or take a chance of being recognized as the rebel leader. The cunning Apostate takes quickly the disguise of a good angel:

And now a stripling Cherub he appears,
Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
Youth smil'd Celestial, and to every Limb
Suitable grace diffus'd, so well he feign'd;
Under a Coronet his flowing hair
In curls on either cheek play'd, wings he wore
Of many a color'd plume sprinkl'd with Gold,
His habit fit for speed succinct, and held
Before his decent steps a Silver wand.
(iii.636-44)

According to Kranidas, this disguise "is a cheap one for an archangel." He adds that "the curls are less manly and

²⁴Harding, "Milton's Bee-Simile," 665.

dignified than those of Adam, which 'Round from his parted forelock manly hung / Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad'" (iv.302-03); also his wings are less striking and less powerful than Raphael's,²⁵ which have already been described.

Kranidas speculates that Milton may have meant the sun episode as a "little joke on the matter of 'decency.'"²⁶ He notes that the whole passage is strewn with such words related to propriety and decorum as proper, Suitable, fit, and decent. Milton, according to Kranidas, may have been attacking "the proper appearances of Anglicanism" as defined by Archbishop Laud, a very controversial religious figure of the seventeenth century. "Throughout the scene of Satan's first disguise, mere surface consistency is shown as a false value."²⁶ By the time Milton was thirty-five, he had openly attacked religious practices in England. For this reason, Kranidas is correct in suspecting a deliberate and only slightly veiled animosity.

Waddington presents an argument concerning the importance of this first disguise which seems also to fit the ideas of Hanford. In itself, the encounter of Satan and Uriel on the sun is certainly not essential to the plot. Here, in Book Three, Milton pauses to handle some unpoetic but necessary didactic and philosophic, although

²⁵Thomas Kranidas, "Satan's First Disguise," English Language Notes, II (Sept., 1964), 13-14.

²⁶Ibid., 14-15.

not original, business.²⁷ Milton quite clearly reveals here an accepted belief:

For neither Men nor Angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone,
By his permissive will, through Heav'n and Earth: . . .
(iii.682-85)

Waddington explains the purpose of the encounter between Satan and Uriel in this manner:

What he [Milton] does do in the passage is explain why it is possible for Uriel to be deceived, and--by implication--why Satan cannot tempt Eve in the same form. Were he to do so, the evil would be invisible, and the Fall would occur through error rather than choice, thereby clouding the question of free will. . . . In order to prevent confusion of the free will issue, the temptation must be consummated with Satan in a guise that 'ill seems,' regardless of its effectiveness in masking Satan's identity.²⁸

Satan's first disguise then is a link in a chain. His metamorphoses reflect the changing state of his spirit; as his feelings "of fiendish hate and attempted revenge" grow, he moves down a pre-established scale. Each image is proleptic. Satan has reached his highest fallen state when he is on the sun, and he can only spiral downward.²⁹

Milton, however, is not simply inventing a situation to explain another portion of his epic narrative. He has

²⁷Hanford, A Milton Handbook, pp. 201-02.

²⁸R. B. Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, IV (Spring, 1962-Winter, 1963), 391.

²⁹A. B. Chambers, "Milton's Proteus and Satan's Visit to the Sun," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LXII, No. 2 (April, 1963), 286-87.

in mind an accepted interpretation of Revelation 19:17 and 2 Corinthians 11:14 to support his use of an archangel on the sun and a good-angel disguise for Satan.³⁰ In Revelation the words " . . . I saw an angel standing in the sun" appear;³¹ in Corinthians appears the statement "For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."³² There is no special source known for Milton's decision to use a stripling angel; however, Tasso and Spenser, two of Milton's idols, previously had used a young spirit in their writing.³³

Perhaps Satan's first disguise puts Uriel at ease more than any other could have done, for the adoring spirit is perfectly willing to praise the ambitions of the cherub and to answer any question. When Satan says he has an "unspeakable desire to see, and know" (111.662) more of God's creations, the archangel gladly tells him how to travel directly to the Garden of Eden below. Without wasting any time, Satan "Took leave" (111.739).

Once on earth, Satan reaches his lowest level spiritually and physically. The steady decline of his nature is recorded by Milton in Books Two and Three, where he compares the devilish figure to a "weather-beaten Vessel" (11.1043), to a "Vultur on Imaus bred" (111.431),

³⁰McColley, Sources, p. 135.

³¹Rev. 19:17. (R.S.V.)

³²2 Cor. 11:14. (R.S.V.)

³³McColley, Sources, p. 135.

and to a "scout" (iii.543). These similes, which consecutively occur before Satan's arrival on earth, have a tendency to formulate smaller images in the reader's mind. As a scout, Satan metaphorically has reached the level of a human being stalking his prey. When he reaches the earth, he drops to a lower level on the Great Chain of Being, which is ruled over by God; for on earth, he leaves the reasoning group and enters the world of animals. Gradually the poet, through his use of similes, is able to lead one to accept better the actual metamorphoses that occur beginning in Book Four.

Surprisingly, Milton's animal imagery differs from similar imagery of other important epic poets mostly because of its "relative infrequency." Homer, Virgil, Ronsard, Trissino, Tasso, Du Bartas, Scudery, Chapelain, Spenser, Ariosto, Ercilla, and Camoens lavishly used animal similes. The great poet of Paradise Lost adapted some of the traditional images; but, for the most part, he disregards the comparisons that came with "the epic poet's inheritance and equipment." He does not slip the old stand-bys into his narrative unless they have more than a slight relevance. Whaler claims that Milton "selects an animal image only when the perfect opportunity appears."³⁴ The imagery in Paradise Lost that reflects Satan's changing nature is very important to the characterization and over-all

³⁴Whaler, "Animal Simile in Paradise Lost," 534, 537, 545.

meaning of the epic.

The similes of Books Two and Three prove to be anticipatory of other similes and actual changes in form. Soon after the vulture simile denoting greed,³⁵ Satan is described as "a prowling Wolf" (iv.183) and as the "first grand Thief" (iv.192). Before even these comparisons, however, Satan lands on Mount Niphates, where he undergoes various changes as his emotions fluctuate. Indeed, Eden reminds him of the life he had willingly rejected. He commences his oration to the sun "that is softened with several transient touches of remorse and self-accusation."³⁶ Passionately he begins,

O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy Sphere;
Till Pride and worse Ambition threw me down
Warring in Heav'n against Heav'n's matchless King:
Ah wherefore! he deserv'd no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.
(iv.37-45)

Milton tells us,

. . . each passion dimm'd his face,
Thrice chang'd with pale, ire, envy and despair,
Which marr'd his borrow'd visage, and betray'd
Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld.
(iv.114-17)

The reader learns that someone was watching Satan's flight to earth--Uriel. The "arch-felon" (iv.179) becomes

³⁵Milton, Paradise Lost, n. 196, p. 282.

³⁶Albert S. Cook, Criticisms on "Paradise Lost" (New York: Phaeton Press, 1968), p. 71.

so "disfigur'd" (iv.127) as he rants and raves that the good angel easily realizes that he has been tricked. Immediately Uriel leaves the sun to warn the angels guarding Paradise that a demon, who may have evil intentions, is lurking nearby.

The wolf- and thief-like figure of Satan that one can easily accept because of the previous vulture simile is explained by Milton in this way:

As when a prowling Wolf,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching where Shepherds pen thir Flocks at eve
In hurdld Cotes amid the field secure,
Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the Fold:
Or as a Thief bent to unhoard the cash
Of some rich Burgher, whose substantial doors,
Cross-barr'd and bolted fast, fear no assault,
In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles:
So clomb this first grand Thief into God's Fold:
So since into his Church lewd Hirelings climb.
(iv.183-93)

According to Tillyard, the above passage is a "'perfect touch of deliberate comedy.'" He says, however, the wolf and thief images do function satisfactorily as transition between Satan, the fallen hero, and Satan, the tempter.³⁷ The usefulness of this break in narrative is seen by Tillyard as merely a pleasing bit of transition.

Rusche places more value on the passage than Tillyard. He says Milton's sources for his comparisons are what makes them especially valuable to the story, as well as to the over-all unity of the epic. He admits that the

³⁷ Harry Rusche, "Biblical Allusion and Imagery in a Passage of Paradise Lost," English Studies, XLIX (Aug., 1968), 332, citing E. M. W. Tillyard. (Hereinafter, this work is called "Biblical Allusion.")

image of the fallen fiend "as a second-storey man appears at first curiously out of place and amusing." However, he then identifies the Biblical references that the scholar and poet surely had in mind. By these, he says, it is clear that Milton was attempting more than humor. The wolf simile, for instance, can be traced to Acts 20:29, " . . . where St. Paul says, 'For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.'" ³⁸ In Joel 2:9 the image of a thief is suggested: "'They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.'" ³⁹ Merritt Y. Hughes has noted that John 10:1 seems to combine the other two Biblical references: "'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.'" ⁴⁰ Another view is possible too from what Milton says at the end of this passage. One can interpret his "So since into his Church lewd Hirelings climb" as a denunciation of the corrupt, seventeenth-century clergymen. Its Biblical reference has been cited as John 10:11-12, where Christ speaks against hirelings who leave their sheep in danger. All in all, this eleven-line

³⁸Ibid., citing St. Paul's words which appear in Acts 20:29 (R.S.V.).

³⁹Rusche, "Biblical Allusion," 332, citing Joel 2:9 (R.S.V.).

⁴⁰Rusche, "Biblical Allusion," 332-33, citing John 10:1 (R.S.V.).

passage breaks " . . . the narrative to describe for us through the various images the inherent theme of threatening danger, destruction, and evil; the Satan of Books One and Two, the archangel who was the adversary of God and who had just done battle with his peers, gives way to the treacherous Satan of Book Four who seeks to avenge himself through God's new creation and to introduce Sin and Death into the Garden." Rusche denounces Tillyard's theory of planned comedy by saying that the entire passage is instead "forceful transition which grimly foreshadows the physical and spiritual violation to be accomplished by Satan." He further claims that this passage is a clear effort to build dramatic tension in a story with a very well-known ending.⁴¹

Indeed, the poet here is once again relying on established references. The wolf and thief images are not meant to provide comic relief at a tense moment; they are meant to increase anxiety in the reader. The thought of a one-time heavenly creature being so foreboding is amusing, but this amusement is only secondary to the real purpose of the passage.

After displaying characteristics of a wolf and a thief, Satan becomes "like a Cormorant" (iv.196) or vulture, another symbol closely aligned with the increasing evilness and destructiveness of the revengeful Satan. The "ravenous bird of prey" fits the nature of the demon who sits in the

⁴¹Rusche, "Biblical Allusion," 332-33.

tree of life plotting death for those more fortunate than himself.⁴² According to Robin's Animal Lore in English Literature, there is a statement in Aelian (iii.7) that says, "'Sweet perfumes are a cause of death to vultures.'"⁴³ Significantly, perhaps, sweet words are used in the temptation scene by Satan to cause the fall of mankind; they cause also the further degeneration of the fallen angel.

Milton's source for this image of the disguised Satan sitting in a treetop is the Iliad, " . . . where two deities are described as perching on the top of an oak in the shape of vultures."⁴⁴ At least this animal is one "with some of the freedom that belongs to the angels," for Satan at this point can still be visualized as a creature capable of flying through the air.⁴⁵ Milton perhaps thought that an image suitable for two pagan gods is certainly suitable for the fallen angel.

From his high lookout, Satan admires the beauty of Adam and Eve. He exclaims to himself about the human pair:

Not Spirits, yet to heav'nly Spirits bright
 Little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue
 With wonder, and could love, so lively shines
 In them Divine resemblance, and such grace
 The hand that form'd them on thir shape hath pour'd.
 (iv.361-65)

⁴²Ibid., 333.

⁴³Percy Ansell Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature (London: John Murray, 1932), p. 114, citing Aelian.

⁴⁴Cook, Criticisms on "Paradise Lost," p. 72.

⁴⁵Burkhart, John Milton's "Paradise Lost," p. 62.

His own shape drops another level with the beginning of his earthly disguises, which are a part of his role as the tempter. To further his wicked plot, although he almost melts at the couple's "harmless innocence" (iv.388), Satan becomes first a lion and then a tiger. Milton describes the situation in this way:

Then from his lofty stand on that high Tree
 Down he alights among the sportful Herd
 Of those fourfooted kinds, himself now one,
 Now other, as thir shape serv'd best his end
 Nearer to view his prey, and unespied
 To mark what of thir state he more might learn
 By word or action markt; about them round
 A Lion now he stalks with fiery glare,
 Then as a Tiger, who by chance hath spi'd
 In some Purlieu two gentle Fawns at play,
 Straight couches close, then rising changes oft
 His couchant watch, as one who chose his ground
 Whence rushing he might surest seize them both
 Gript in each paw: . . .
 (iv.395-408)

Satan, at this point, knows nothing of the prohibition Adam and Eve have been given by God regarding the tree of knowledge. He assumes the shapes of a lion and a tiger so that he can get within earshot of the lively conversation between the content human beings. While in these disguises, he learns that man must tend the garden but not eat of the tree of knowledge. He also overhears Eve's story of her creation; and when he hears about how she seemed to admire her reflection in the pool, he thinks he has discovered the weaker of the two human beings. Tillyard says that Milton resorts to "faking" when he gives Adam and Eve each a characteristic not "compatible" with a "state of innocence"; he makes Eve

vain, and he makes Adam excessively reverent towards Eve, whom he is supposed to guide. These traits are meant to keep their ultimate fall from seeming like a "lightning-quick change," according to Tillyard.⁴⁶

One inconsistency need not concern the reader when considering the symbolical interpretation of each of Satan's disguises. Before the fall, the earth was in perfect harmony, meaning innocence. The qualities that have become associated with various animals Satan takes as his disguises may not have existed at all before the fall of man. There is no reason, however, for one to assume that innocence connotes perfection, as Tillyard does in the case of Adam and Eve.⁴⁷ Later in discussion of God's condemning of the serpent following its use by Satan for the temptation, the unknown crime of the serpent will be mentioned. Whether animals were capable of foul acts before the fall is really irrelevant here; Milton's seventeenth-century audience knew and understood the symbols that he used.

As a lion and a tiger, Satan still is capable of walking upon the earth. These disguises symbolically are lower than one in which he can soar through the air. These beasts represent Satan's spiritual shape as he comes closer to seducing mankind. Cook says these disguises

⁴⁶Tillyard, Studies in Milton, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," 391.

share a common purpose; they "give an agreeable surprise to the reader" and "connect that series of adventures."⁴⁸

Waddington claims that these four-legged beasts used by Satan are known for certain qualities established by Christian iconography.⁴⁹ For instance, a "lion has always typified strength, courage, and majesty. . . ." Homer "compares Ajax defending the body of Patroclus to a lion guarding his cubs. . . ."⁵⁰ The lion in Spenser's Faerie Queene is said to possess "'imperiall powre.'"⁵¹ Robin says that Pliny referred to the foulness and poison in a lion's breath.⁵² The lion's reputation for regality and ferocity is still known today.

The tiger disguise that Satan adopted is symbolically very similar to his other feline disguise. Virgil uses a tiger to imply savageness,⁵³ and Tennyson uses a tiger as a symbol "of lust and ferocity" in his In Memoriam.⁵⁴

"Neither lion nor tiger is fully representative of

⁴⁸Cook, Criticisms on "Paradise Lost," p. 72.

⁴⁹Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," 391.

⁵⁰Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature, pp. 16, 18.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 79, citing Edmund Spenser Faerie Queene II.v.10.

⁵²Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature, p. 100, citing Pliny Natural History XI, 277.

⁵³Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature, p. 18, citing Virgil.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 59, citing Tennyson's In Memoriam.

Satan's nature, and for his first attempt upon Eve Satan selects instead the guise of the toad."⁵⁵ Although Satan can only creep close to the ground in the form of a toad, to further his evil plans he willingly takes the shape of the lowly amphibian.⁵⁶ Ithuriel, an angelical guard sent by Gabriel in search of the demonic intruder, finds Satan in this disguise close to the ear of the sleeping Mother of Mankind. Milton tells the story in this manner:

. . . him there they found
 Squat like a Toad, close at the ear of Eve;
 Assaying by his Devilish art to reach
 The Organs of her Fancy, and with them forge
 Illusions as he list, Phantasms and Dreams,
 Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint
 Th' animal spirits that from pure blood arise
 Like gentle breaths from Rivers pure, thence raise
 At least distemper'd, discontented thoughts,
 Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires
 Blown up with high conceits ingend'ring pride.
 (iv.799-809)

Satan falls when he allows his pride to possess his reason. He wants Eve, whom he is envious of, to fall in the same way; he wants to play on her love for herself until all her reason has become rationalization. Fox says that "pride, according to the teachings of St. Gregory, is a vice that arises from any of several improper attitudes toward a good."⁵⁷ The "good," in this case, is the harmony

⁵⁵Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," 392.

⁵⁶Pechoux, "'O Foul Descent': Satan and the Serpent Form," 188.

⁵⁷Fox, "Satan's Triad of Vices," 261.

of life in the garden associated with the will of God. Satan recognizes that he foolishly failed to appreciate his form of existence in Heaven, and he is certain that the new female creation will make the same fatal mistake about her environment, especially after he applies some deceiving black magic.

The increasingly evil Satan practices "Devilish art" (iv.801) on the sleeping beauty. Milton borrows the idea of toads being related to witchcraft from traditional necromancy.⁵⁸ This amphibian has been associated with poison since the earliest Christian centuries. Spenser uses this tradition in Faerie Queene when he writes of one of his minor characters: "'Ne ever is he wont on ought to feed / But toades and frogs, his pasture poysonous.'"⁵⁹ Shakespeare also refers to a toad as being noxious; in As You Like It, he writes that a toad is "'ugly and venomous.'"⁶⁰

Besides its toxic quality, a toad depicts envy. In "Satan's Triad of Vices," Fox recalls that Du Bartas and Spenser frequently use a toad in their writings as a symbol of envy.⁶¹ This animal also "appears several times in the Mundorum Explicatio," where "personified Envy of the

⁵⁸Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," 392.

⁵⁹Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature, pp. 135-36, citing Edmund Spenser Faerie Queene III.x.59.

⁶⁰Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature, p. 135, citing William Shakespeare As You Like It II.1.13.

⁶¹Fox, "Satan's Triad of Vices," 274.

infernal council wears a garment decorated with swelling toads," and where the "'Toad speckled fruit'" of the tree of knowledge "best suits the 'slavering Chaps of Envy.'"⁶² The last quote from Mundorum Explicatio, if Milton was familiar with it, may be the poet's source for the unconventional, involuntary transformation scene in Book Ten; in it the fallen angels mechanically try to eat the forbidden fruit, but the apples turn to ashes as they enter the mouths that are so anxious.

The whole passage involving Eve's dream is an original rendition by Milton, which is important to the narrative in several ways.⁶³ First, the scene where Eve hears the wicked "toad" in a dream and thinks she is hearing her beloved Adam serves as the beginning of Satan's success on earth. This incident is unique with Milton's epic, for no one before his time ever used two temptations. Milton clearly was familiar with the "two most authoritative interpretations" of the temptation of Eve. One school favors the idea that Adam and Eve fell their first day in the garden. Supporters of this belief use Psalm 49:13 to support their theory. Another group hypothesizes that man did not fall until the eighth day of his creation. Milton utilizes both theories in his Paradise Lost by having two separate temptation scenes. An "initial and unsuccessful

⁶²Ibid., citing Mundorum Explicatio.

⁶³Howard Schultz, "Satan's Serenade," Philological Quarterly, XXVII (Oct., 1948), 17.

seduction" occurs when the disguised Satan whispers in the ear of the sleeping Eve.⁶⁴ This happens on the first day of creation in the epic. One week later Satan returns to earth to finish what he has begun, after spending a week circling the earth on its dark side (ix.63-66).

Besides offering Milton an opportunity to please perhaps both schools of thought, the double temptation also provides a time lapse that makes Eve's change in nature more believable and, incidentally, helps bridge the long conversation between Raphael and Adam. Eve's harmonious nature is injected by cunning words that will do just as Satan expected: cause discontent.⁶⁵ Following the devil's first attempt, the reader is made to guess the varied thoughts that must be circulating in Eve's head. One interpretation of Eve's increasing restlessness during Raphael's visit is that she already had her mind full of ideas planted by Satan. Before the Heaven-sent guest has finished his wise advice and interesting accounts, Eve excuses herself from the masculine company. The poet partly explains her actions:

Yet went she not, as not with such discourse
Delighted, or not capable her ear
Of what was high: such pleasure she reserv'd,
Adam relating, she sole Auditress; . . .
(viii.48-51)

⁶⁴McColley, Sources, pp. 159-60.

⁶⁵Schultz, "Satan's Serenade," 17-18.

Eve, as suggested, may simply have preferred to hear the information from Adam; or, knowing Adam could always tell her later, she may have simply preferred to think of other matters at that time.

All during the conversation between Raphael and Adam, which runs from Book Five through Book Eight, suspense builds. The reader has to wonder what the effect of the first temptation will be, although the ultimate effect is too well-known to cause surprise. Obviously, the questioning Eve of Book Nine is a product of the maliciously injected dream. Satan succeeds in making the dream "her reality" by reaching figuratively into what some have called her id. He activates her "animal spirits" (iv.805) or her "latent irrational tendency to sin."⁶⁶

When Satan is discovered in his awkward-to-explain position and disguise, he allows the good angel Ithuriel to act first. A touch of the heavenly spear automatically forces Satan to lose his toad's shape, " . . . for no falsehood can endure / Touch of Celestial temper, . ." (iv.811-12). This touch turns the surprised demon into a "grisly King" (iv.821). The good angels, however, do not at first recognize their captive; they only know that he is one of the fallen spirits. Words of combat soon fill the air; Satan feels obviously slighted when he is not recognized as Lucifer. One of the good angels explains frankly to

⁶⁶Ibid., 22.

him that he "resembl'st now . . . sin and place of doom obscure and foul" (iv.839-40).

The good Gabriel shortly hereafter engages in a verbal war with the lying Prince of Darkness. Only during this brief discussion is Satan allowed on earth to reach his mountainous size. At all other times on earth, he is man-sized or smaller, just as in Heaven he is always celestial-sized. From unusually large, kingly proportions, he dilates himself to the height of "Teneriff or Atlas" (iv.987) when his interrogation by Gabriel becomes heated. Kastor calls this instance the "one exception" to the consistent pattern that Milton establishes between the "relative sizes" of heaven, hell, and earth and Satan's role in each location. Although an exception, the large image is linked to other imagery. For example, Teneriff is a large peak in the Moroccan mountain chain, which is located in the Canary Islands. In Book One, Satan is compared to Leviathan, a whale which had been mistaken for an island. Atlas is the name of the popular, globe-holding Titan of Greek mythology. In Book One Beelzebub is said to have a stature like that of the famous Titan Atlas, and Satan is said to be comparable to the Titans "that warr'd on Jove" (i.198).⁶⁷

The next time the faded angel appears in the narrative, he cunningly hides himself from view by becoming

⁶⁷Kastor, "'In His Own Shape': The Stature of Satan in Paradise Lost," 267-68.

part of the mist of the Tigris River that rises in a fountain at the foot of the tree of life. He takes this disguise "to elude" (ix.158) the angels guarding the new creation. This disguise symbolically also serves a purpose. When Satan is in his foulest disguise, the serpent, Eve enters his field of vision "veiled in a Cloud of Fragrance" (ix.425), after leaving her husband's presence. Satan's misty image serves as a contrast of natures. Although not as pure as she was originally, Eve still is far purer than the fallen rebel angel. Whereas Eve is compared to the "fairest . . . Flow'r" (ix.432), Satan "foreshadows the grey ambiguity of the world after the Fall."⁶⁸

While propelling himself around the earth, "Sea he had searcht and Land" (ix.76) for a form to take that "Most opportune might serve his Wiles" (ix.85). Satan announces to himself that the serpent, the "subtlest Beast of all the Field" (ix.86), is his choice as a tool for his second seduction attempt. As he glides about "Like a black mist low creeping" (ix.180), the heartless demon is looking for a serpent into which to pour his soul.

In the narrative appear hints about the nature of the serpent. Satan refers to this creature as an "Imp of fraud" (ix.89) and as a "wily Snake" (ix.91). Satan is made to share similar natural characteristics with the

⁶⁸Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," 392.

snake; as early as Book Two, Milton begins preparing the reader for the devil's most significant alteration in form. In Book Two (l. 815), in Book Seven (l. 495), and in Book Nine (ll. 307, 324), Satan is referred to as "subtle," as well as in Book Ten (l. 20). Waddington writes that "the serpent is the first disguise that is symbolically representative of Satan's whole perverted nature."⁶⁹

Satan says he selected the serpent because of all animals it would best conceal his identity; but, as will later be suggested, Satan's disguise really should not have hidden his wickedness. At this point, the devious demon realizes that his nature will actually fuse with the snake's. He has indicated no reluctance to merge his molecules with those of other creatures; however, he dramatically pauses before becoming a snake. He exclaims aloud to an empty mass:

O foul descent! that I who erst contended
 With Gods to sit the highest, am now constrain'd
 Into a Beast, and mixt with bestial slime,
 This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
 That to the highth of Deity aspir'd;
 But what will not Ambition and Revenge
 Descend to? who aspires must down as low
 As high he soar'd, obnoxious first or last
 To basest things. Revenge, at first though sweet,
 Bitter ere long back on itself recoils;
 Let it; I reckon not, . . .
 (ix.163-73)

Pechoux says that this pause is another part of the comparison established in the narrative between Christ and

⁶⁹Ibid.

Satan. Whereas the Son willingly assumes a "corporeal form," the devil in Paradise Lost "only after 'inspection deep' and 'long debate' . . . resolves to take" the temporary descent his plan requires. The Son's willing humiliation leads to exaltation, but Satan's leads to a final, further descent.⁷⁰

Perhaps at this dramatic moment in his effort to punish God through man, Satan realizes that more than his pride has permitted him to make himself a fool. He states that his revenge will really be like a strike at himself. The loser, however, lies to himself to prevent the full horror of his situation from penetrating; he pretends to believe that he must fall to such a low level in order to rise again to the heights.

"Many strange and startling statements have been made in all ages about serpents or snakes." A wide-spread "belief was that snakes were generated from the spinal marrow of a human corpse." This idea can be traced to the time of Antigonus of Carystus (250 B.C.), who writes that "little snakes are born from the backbone of some dead men when the marrow has decayed, if before their death these have inhaled the odour of a dead snake."⁷¹

In Psalm 140 one can find a reference to venom being associated with the tongue of a serpent. Shakespeare

⁷⁰Pechoux, "'O Foul Descent': Satan and the Serpent Form," 189-90.

⁷¹Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature, pp. 142-43.

makes several uses of serpents in imagery, obviously with this Biblical passage in mind. He also intermixes the belief that the tongue of the serpent moves so quickly that it is naturally treacherous.⁷² Especially when applied to human beings, the word serpents seems always to have connoted bad qualities.⁷³ Whaler writes that "poisonous deceit and cruelty" are frequently associated with the squirming animal.⁷⁴

Satan finally takes the form of the "subtlest Beast," after much consideration. When he enters its body, he notes that its wings are wrapped around its sleeping body "In Labyrinth of many a round self-roll'd, . ." (ix.183). The beautiful creature "With burnisht Neck of verdant Gold" (ix.501) scholars have identified as one of the flying variety referred to by classical and Biblical authorities, as well as contemporaries of Milton. Although poets "are not often naturalists" and "are usually not concerned with scientific accuracy,"⁷⁵ Milton's flying snakes are founded upon many sources. The poet may have read about this type of reptile in "an account of Herodotus' visit to Buto in Arabia, where each spring there was a fight between the ibises and swarms of winged serpents . . . that flew in

⁷²Ibid., pp. 143-44.

⁷³Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," 392-93.

⁷⁴Whaler, "Animal Simile in Paradise Lost," 535.

⁷⁵Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature, p. 119.

from Egypt." More likely, Milton was recalling "a flying serpent that wings his way through Isaiah 30:6. . . ." Since in "Milton's age the doctrine of the great chain of being ruled out the existence of any creatures in ancient times that could not be found in the contemporary world," Milton probably also knew the accounts of Odoardo Barbessa, Cardano, and Scaliger, men of the seventeenth century.⁷⁶

The serpent in Paradise Lost sneaks close to Eve as she works alone in a segment of the Garden. He sails toward her; and trying to gain her attention, he "licked the ground whereon she trod" (ix.526). Finally she notices him; he then begins "His fraudulent temptation" (ix.531). Eve is surprised that the creature can talk; but, otherwise, she does not indicate any particular suspicions. She accepts very quickly his explanation that the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge had brought him human powers of reasoning and speaking. When he stands erect, as an orator ready to begin a speech, Eve still does not doubt his words. She hears herself called "Queen of the Universe" (ix.684), and she absorbs compliments and faulty logic.

Waddington attacks Milton's Mother of Mankind by his argument that she should have been aware of the basic fraudulent nature of the serpent. He says that Milton deliberately refrains from making his tempter ambiguous; Milton carefully, Waddington says, implies that the serpent

⁷⁶D. C. Allen, "Milton's Winged Serpents," Modern Language Notes, LIX (Dec., 1944), 537-38.

is "evil independently of Satan." Furthermore,

Milton's purpose seems clear: Eve should recognize the essential evil of the serpent by appearance and actions--especially when he speaks--even if she cannot tell that Satan is within the serpent. A good Christian armed with faith, grace, and reason should be able to withstand any temptations and detect the presence of evil.

The point is not an unfamiliar one. Milton's "recognizably bad" Satan seems to be a result of a modification of an accepted graphic tradition.⁷⁷

Later the judgment that comes as a result of man's fall includes a punishment for the serpent. The matter of whether the subtle animal was a "mere tool" or a willing partner had always been a bothersome issue. Milton never answers the question directly; but he does imply that because the serpent is made to crawl on its belly, as the Bible also reveals, he must have been "guilty" in a way that the other animals Satan entered were not. "For the sake of consistency, the Serpent must be actively evil by his own choice."⁷⁸ Milton clearly makes his Adam and Eve

. . . with strength entire, and free will arm'd,
Complete to have discover'd and repulst
Whatever wiles of Foe or seeming Friend.
(x.9-11)

Eve should have been able to resist the advances of the chivalrous imposter.

Fredson Bowers presents an interesting variation of the story of the Fall of Man. He denies that Eve was

⁷⁷Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," 394.

⁷⁸Ibid., 395.

guilty of sinful vanity or narcissism. Instead, he says that such a view is "superficial . . . in comparison to the richness of meaning that Milton places in it." Bowers says that there is a deliberate contrast of basic natures in the descriptions of the scenes when Adam and Eve first open their eyes on earth. Adam awakes in broad sunlight; he immediately directs his eyes to Heaven and then begins a reasoning process. Eve, in contrast, discovers a shady world--"not a broad and truth-revealing sunlight"--and she sees the sky only indirectly in a clear pool of water. Double foreboding is evident: Adam is to become Eve's mirror, instead of the pool, which she willingly leaves behind; Eve is to be dependent upon Adam. According to Bowers, Adam's reasoning and Eve's passion for beauty are complimentary. Love is the only imperfection in their natures. When Adam allows his excessive love for Eve to keep him from doing his duty to her and God, he causes their fall, contrary to the usual interpretation. He should never have allowed her to leave his side, regardless of any resulting dismay.⁷⁹ No matter where the sin or blame lies, man did fall.

Satan emerges the seeming victor. Adam falls by choice; when his lovely Eve offers him the fruit, he sadly resolves that her doom must also be his. He knows

⁷⁹Fredson Bowers, "Adam, Eve, and the Fall in Paradise Lost," PMLA, LXXXIV (Mar., 1969), 265-66.

that she has been "beguil'd" (ix.904), and he is unwilling to desert her since they are really "One flesh" (ix.959) and because he feels that she disregarded the prohibition only because he was not at her side to guide her. Raphael had warned them.

The Son confirms Adam's attitude when He accuses him of resigning his "Manhood" (x.148) to the inferior Eve's whims. He then proceeds to pass judgment on those who are guilty. Adam and Eve receive the same judgment as in Genesis. The Son claims the serpent is receiving only what is fitting to its basic "Nature" (x.169), although He fails to explain how this state may have originated. The Son calls the serpent only an "instrument" (x.166) of one more wicked. Satan, who is not present as long as Christ is on the earth, is not directly judged; but the Son explains that his penalty is to be "in mysterious terms" (x.173). In effect, the judgment made on the serpent in the epic and in the Bible is also that of Satan, since they have in reality, at least briefly, and symbolically, become one. The epic poet reveals this interpretation in the latter part of Book Ten, where Satan involuntarily becomes a serpent and eats dust.

Satan does not really miss much that happens immediately after his successful temptation of Eve. According to Milton,

Hee, after Eve seduc't, unminded slunk
 Into the Wood fast by, and changing shape
 To observe the sequel, saw his guileful act
 By Eve, though all unweeting, seconded
 Upon her Husband, saw thir shame that sought
 Vain covertures; but when he saw descend
 The Son of God to judge them, terrifi'd
 Hee fled, not hoping to escape, but shun
 The present, fearing guilty what his wrath
 Might suddenly inflict; that past, return'd
 By Night, and list'ning where the hapless Pair
 Sat in thir sad discourse and various plaint,
 Thence gather'd his own doom; which understood
 Not instant, but of future time, . . .
 (x.332-45)

So in a crafty way, Satan learns that the penalty for his crime against mankind and God will be effective sometime in the future. The Artificer weakly disguises his blot behind the face "of an Angel bright" (x.327). He quickly descends to his kingdom of fire to brag of his "triumphal act" (x.390)..

Satan's victory speech in Book Ten is preceded by several brief metamorphoses. First he transforms his darkened mass into a "Plebeian Angel militant / Of lowest order" (x.442-43) so that he can walk undetected through the throngs that were awaiting his return. Next he makes himself invisible while ascending "his high Throne" (x.445). This alteration in his form is surely meant as a parallel to the event described in Book Three, lines 372-82, where God appears invisible on His throne and then appears as a "full blaze" of beams amidst a cloud. Satan thinks of himself as a god; he transforms his remaining brightness into a short show of allowed artificiality:

At last as from a Cloud his fulgent head
 And shape Star-bright appear'd, or brighter, clad
 With what permissive glory since his fall
 Was left him, or false glitter: . . .
 (x.449-52)

Some have speculated that Satan's "Star-bright" transformation is a symbol of evil. Its source may be the comets of 1572 and 1604, which were said to have followed respectively the Saint Bartholomew massacre and the Guy Fawkes fiasco. These two "memorable events for English Protestantism" Milton may have heard about and mixed with a personal memory of some comet. Scholars have produced varying arguments regarding comets or supernovas that Milton may have remembered. Regardless of Milton's knowledge of science, comets were associated with "dire portents," and Milton may have also wished to remind the reader of Ophiuchus, the "'serpent bearer,'" although his astronomy is not entirely accurate. Milton does effectively compare the vainglorious Satan to a bright star; both, he indicates, appear suddenly and unexpectedly, and both are inherently evil.⁸⁰

After obtaining the attention of all in this manner, the Arch-fiend proceeds to tell how he has been victorious on earth. He informs the others that he has deceived mankind and received only a bruise as a result. At the moment when the cheering can be expected to begin, all the fallen

⁸⁰William B. Hunter, Jr., "Satan as Comet: Paradise Lost, II, 708-711," English Language Notes, V (Sept., 1967), 19-21.

angels become serpents involuntarily. Instead of praise, Satan hears "A dismal universal hiss, the sound / Of public scorn" (x.508-09). Immediately thereafter, the darkest angel realizes that all will be punished in the form in which their joint crime was committed, even himself, the snake-like one. All then hopelessly grope for fruit that becomes dust--as described in Isaiah 65.

Milton truly breaks precedents by his re-organizing of the time sequence related to Satan's lowest transformation. In Paradise Lost one is able to visualize the devil as "miserable in the height of his triumphs" and Adam "triumphant in the height of his misery."⁸¹

Samuel speculates that Milton was remembering Dante's Hell, where the criminals had to continue doing forever involuntarily what they had formerly done voluntarily on earth. All thieves were changed into one of three kinds of serpents, based on amounts of "fraud, slyness, and malevolence." Satan is depicted as a thief as he sneaks into the Garden of Eden for the first time to attempt a crime against the Almighty and His human creations. Perhaps Milton meant the reader to make the association between a thief and a serpent.⁸²

Steadman justifies Milton's choice of punishment

⁸¹Cook, Criticisms on "Paradise Lost," p. 151.

⁸²Irene Samuel, "The Valley of Serpent: Inferno, XXIV-XXV, and Paradise Lost, X, 504-577," PMLA, LXXVIII (Sept., 1963), 449.

for Satan in several ways. He claims that by not making the devil's lowest form a result of his revolt in Heaven, Milton shifts the emphasis to the crime committed on earth, which, of course, occupies the major part of the action in Paradise Lost. Milton utilizes a Dantean type of poetic justice; he leads to the involuntary transformation in steps. Through what Steadman calls "adroit foreshadowing," the reader expects Satan to be punished by more than a bruise.⁸³

Milton's alteration of accepted chronology is justified by Steadman in two other related ways. He points out that Milton had "to mitigate the inevitable impression of demonic triumph" by saving Satan's doom to the last possible moment. By placing the final transformation during what might have become a victory celebration, Milton diverts the reader's attention to "the overruling power of Providence." Also, as a result of "his mastery of timing," Milton is able to "dissipate the illusion of heroism" which may have become attached to the Archangel. Therefore, Milton chooses to re-establish all reality at a moment when depression may have started settling in the reader.⁸⁴

Steadman justifies Milton's choice of timing and punishment in a literary way, too. He states that the epic poet's innovation in chronology creates a dramatic tour de

⁸³Steadman, "Archangel to Devil: The Background of Satan's Metamorphosis," 333, 335.

⁸⁴Ibid., 334.

force that helps make the plot as complex as any Aristotle may have admired. The shift in emphasis achieves a surprise effect; at the same time, it avoids breaking the "rule of probability or necessity."⁸⁵

In "'Myself Am Hell,'" Hughes gathers the opinions of others on the matter. He reveals that A. J. A. Waldock believes that the last transformation of Satan is a "mere piece of extraneous cartooning with no real connection with the plot." Addison in Spectator, Number 297, claims that the passage is beautifully designed to soften the "natural disappointment over Satan's victory in Eden. . . ." ⁸⁶ The most satisfactory answer to Waldock, however, is given by Stein, who regards the involuntary transformation of all the fallen angels into serpents as a "'psychological climax,'" as well as a "'physical climax,'" which is necessary to the plot as an "'external confirmation . . . of the internal failure.'" ⁸⁷

⁸⁵Ibid., 334-35.

⁸⁶Merritt Y. Hughes, "'Myself Am Hell,'" Modern Philology, LIV (Nov., 1956), 91, citing Waldock and Addison.

⁸⁷Ibid., 92, citing Stein.

CHAPTER IV

INCONSISTENCIES RESOLVED AND MILTON'S CREATIVITY CONFIRMED

The final transformation of Satan in Paradise Lost is an original rendition of the punishment of the devil--and, thus, the victory of good over evil. It represents the essential fall in the age-old story. Satan cannot remain heroic-seeming in the eyes of the reader; he has to step aside for the real victors to take their rightful places.

The cry of inconsistency has been directed at John Milton primarily because he allows a villain to become "heroic." However, those who see Milton's Satan as a valiant, virtuous leader are forgetting that he is also a tortured and helpless angel who cannot face the pain of truth. This creature attempts evil; but, in reality, he is part of God's universal plans. He is a liar; and really he is only honorable "within a perverted ethical system where evil has become good and vice versa." To see Satan as a hero is to be viewing only "a facade--shadow without substance."¹ Satan may seem noble, until one understands Milton's complex, interwoven style.

¹Steadman, "Image and Idol," 647.

Although the heroic customs of Homer and Virgil are apparent in Paradise Lost in part, clearly Milton was influenced by others as well. The poet does not reject classicism; but he mingles its invocations, epic question, statement of theme, and the many allusions with what he called in the Preface of Reason of Church Government "'Nature.'"² There is some disagreement as to what he meant by this word, but certainly he must have been referring to his manner of intermingling colloquial with standard language, Biblical with pagan stories, and classical with romantic tales. To accomplish this mixture, he had to escape the rigid unity of the Aristotelian image of epic poetry. The poet explains as he invokes the Muse of Poetry:

. . . I thence
 Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous Song,
 That with no middle flight intends to soar
 Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues
 Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme.
 (1.12-16)

Milton never intended his justification of God's ways to man to be interpreted along classical lines. He obviously was attempting something he considered paramount to all others' efforts. He considered his subject matter more vast than all other broad epic subjects. To fail to examine Paradise Lost in the manner in which it was written is an error critics in the past have made. By misunder-

²Lewis, A Preface to "Paradise Lost," pp. 3-4, citing Milton.

standing the very "nature" of Paradise Lost, critics have regarded as faults "those very properties which the poet laboured hardest to attain and which, rightly enjoyed, are essential to its specific delightfulness. . . ." ³

All seems perfectly natural when one recalls that Milton rejected the dramatic form for his subject matter. He began Adam Unparadised, a tragedy; but, in the tragic format, he was compelled to make Satan a mere reporter. In the larger framework of an epic, he was able to expand the usual role of Satan--able to develop this character's potential. Gardner calls Milton a typical Elizabethan, one willing to sacrifice "simplicity of effect and strength of design to imaginative opportunity." Apparently, Gardner feels that Milton's imaginative efforts were successful in some respects; for she speculates that Milton's Satan is "the last great tragic figure in our literature." ⁴ Gilbert, another admirer of Milton's rebel angel, Satan, adds that the great poet's separation from tradition is all part of his "infinite variety." ⁵

Whenever one leaves behind an accepted style, the motives and results are always called into question. The Satan of Paradise Lost is not the same character he had been

³Ibid., p. 2.

⁴Gardner, "Elizabethan Tragedy," pp. 119-20.

⁵Allan H. Gilbert, "Critics of Mr. C. S. Lewis on Milton's Satan," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLVII (Apr., 1948), 225.

in earlier literature. Milton gave his devil more personality. I cannot say without doubt that he is the "last great tragic figure," for in the English language there are many to consider; but the egotistic rebel of Paradise Lost is certainly the most captivating of any before 1667, when the ten-book edition of the epic poem was published. Milton's Prince of Darkness is more believable in human terms; he is less a part of an ancient legend. As the Greek gods were more understandable than the fierce, animalistic Egyptian gods, Milton's Satan is more realistic than his predecessors.

The Miltonic Satan certainly is the main character throughout the beginning books of Paradise Lost. His predominance is what makes many critics question Milton's efforts. When the reader becomes thoroughly acquainted with the Prince of Darkness, the poet introduces Adam and Eve, who gradually become the centers of attention. Yet, some critics question why Satan is allowed so much development by the poet.

Perhaps because Satan is part of God's relationship with man, a part often not understood, Milton wanted to help his reader set him in the correct perspective. Satan, by doing evil, becomes increasingly small, physically and spiritually. Through similes and allusions, the reader can trace his degeneration. He becomes a model of one who turns willingly against the ways of God and then remains unrepentant. Of course, Adam and Eve are far more desirable models after one sees the low state to which the tormented

Satan must stoop.

The steps he descends are all part of a master plan by a master poet. Each is heavily entwined in tradition and yet unique. Lewis states that each image is loaded with "power of action at a distance."⁶ Also, significant in the scheme is the paralleling of Satan to Christ. Milton accomplishes more than any before or after him with his Satan.

Other most important touches of originality involving this beguiling angel are the double temptation scenes and the final transformation scene. I feel that both are vital to the poet's over-all efforts to trace the path of unforgiven and unforgiveable sin. They, too, utilize prominent theories without belittling any.

John Milton can safely be called an aesthetic opportunist. Backed by knowledge of religious history and literary techniques and a creative mind, he waited for all to ripen into the epic that became Paradise Lost. Not till he was about the age of forty-nine was he ready to compile and create the work that was to guarantee his place among the memorable authors of all times. Nor is his Satan likely to be forgotten.

⁶Lewis, A Preface to "Paradise Lost," p. 43.

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