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The Old English Genesis and Milton's Paradise Lost: the characterisation of Satan

Elisa Ramazzina

1. Introduction

The aim of this work is to consider to what extent, if any, the English poet John Milton may have been influenced by the medieval English poem known

Genesis B in composing *Paradise Lost* with particular attention to the characterisation of Satan. The study will explore the similarities and differences in the depiction of Satan in both poems and will begin with the premise that this topic is extremely problematic. It is indeed very difficult to determine whether Milton may actually have been influenced by the Old English text, as the descriptions of Satan and of his dwelling undoubtedly refer to a series of *topoi* that derive from a well-established common literary tradition. The presence of common sources, the analysis of which lies outside the aim of this work, may indeed account for some interesting correspondences between the two poems. However, the analysis of similarities and differences between the two texts is undoubtedly interesting, as it may prompt fascinating causes for reflection and shed new light on the topic.

The *Old English Genesis* is a poetic rewriting of the apocryphal accounts of the fall of the angels and of Man. It forms part of the *Oxford, Bodleian Library 5123 Junius 11* manuscript¹, dating back to ca. AD 1000². It is the longest text in the manuscript, consisting of 2936 lines, and is made up of two poems known as *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* respectively. It appears that, when the *Old English Genesis* was being copied, the scribe was probably copying from a damaged version of the poem and had to deal with a *lacuna*. Therefore he decided to solve the problem interpolating *Genesis B* into *Genesis A*, translating the embedded poem from an Old Saxon original. The moralising and didactic aim is evident in the poem and in the other texts forming the codex, as they invite the reader to avoid evil and to shun devilish temptations. In particular, the *Old English Genesis* urges the reader to avoid false prophets, as they are misleading and treacherous; the punishment for disobedience will be eternal suffering and damnation.

Genesis A reports the Creation, the rebellion of the angels and their fall, and the creation of Man as a consequence of their banishment from Heaven. *Genesis B*³ begins at l. 235 of the *Genesis* poem and ends at l. 851; therefore, it entails the fall of Lucifer and of the rebel angels and the temptation of the first parents⁴. In tone it is much more dramatic than *Genesis A*, in particular regarding the soliloquies of Satan and the dialogues between Adam and Eve. The fact that *Genesis* is the only text in the manuscript accompanied by a cycle of illuminations is particularly relevant, for two of them will be part of the analysis, as they show interesting correspondences with Milton's poem.

1 From now onwards, the shortening "Junius 11" will be used.

2 The *Junius 11* manuscript contains four religious poems: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*. It is also known as *Cædmon manuscript*, as it was previously believed that the author of its poems was the seventh-century Anglo-Saxon monk Cædmon. The codex owes its unity to the theme of the strife between Good and Evil, for all poems are *exempla* which call on Christians to follow Christ's teachings and to avoid Satan's temptations, the moral of the stories being that faithfulness to God triumphs over betrayal.

3 The passages of *Genesis B* analysed in this study are taken from: A.N. Doane, *The Saxon Genesis: an edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison and London 1991.

4 As noted by McKillop, the interpolator of *Genesis B* has created a composite text in which the account of the fall of the rebel angels occurs twice.

A.D. McKillop, *Illustrative notes on 'Genesis B'*, "The Journal of English and Germanic Philology", 20, 1921, 1, pp. 28-38.

As well known, *Paradise Lost*⁵ is an epic poem written by John Milton when he was already blind and is formed by 10,565 blank verses in the form of iambic pentameters. It was first published in 1667 in ten books and was published for the second time in 1674 in twelve books⁶ similarly to the structure of Virgil's *Aeneid*⁷. As a matter of fact, choosing the epic genre, Milton placed his poem in a well-established epic tradition, which explains several digressions referring to ancient history and classical mythology⁸ as well as allusions to passages of significant epic poems⁹. Such a wealth of sources makes the comparison between *Paradise Lost* and *Genesis B* more and more difficult and does not help in giving a clear answer to the question proposed in this study. Peculiar to *Paradise Lost* is the “immense richness of its intellectual and poetic content”¹⁰ since it has been influenced by many religious and literary sources that Evans summarizes as follows:

Of the patristic interpretations, for instance, Milton incorporated the allegorical and typological as well as the literal. With them he blended notions derived, directly and indirectly, from rabbinic commentaries, apocryphal documents, Christian-Latin biblical epics, medieval legends and recent plays, poems and tracts on the same subject¹¹.

The poem reports the accounts of the fall of the rebel angels, of Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve and their subsequent exclusion from the Garden of Eden. Through the words of the protagonists, a series of significant topics is dealt with, which express the personal ideas of John Milton. As a political activist and Presbyterian Milton wrote several pamphlets against corruption within the Catholic Church and in particular within the Anglican one; some of these pamphlets even caused his imprisonment. The expression of such ideas both in his poems and in his prose led to his gradual estrangement from Presbyterianism, thus making him an advocate of the abolition of religious figures such as priests and bishops, and, subsequently, of the suppression of any kind of Church. As a matter of fact, Milton argued that the Church, of any form and confession, was an obstacle to what he called “true faith” and that every man should trust only his own conscience rather than Biblical exegesis as the most powerful instrument for understanding the Word of God.

With *Paradise Lost* Milton aimed to show what the fall of the first parents had caused and its consequences for the world, both positive and negative. Moreover, as he states in ll. 24-26 of Book I¹², the poet wanted to affirm the existence of divine providence as well as to justify God's actions towards humanity. Actually, despite describing God as a strict judge like the poet of *Genesis B*, Milton develops the *felix culpa* topic, according to which the banishment of the first parents from Eden should be understood not as a tragic and negative event, but as a positive opportunity for humankind¹³ as, in this way, God has given them the chance to redeem themselves through repentance and true faith, thus allowing the coming of the Redeemer¹⁴.

5 The passages of *Paradise Lost* quoted in this study are taken from; R. Sanesi, *Milton. Paradiso perduto*; Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano 1990.

6 R. Sanesi, *Milton, Paradiso Perduto*, p. XLII.

7 B. Kiefer Lewalski, *The genres of 'Paradise Lost'* in *The Cambridge companion to Milton*, D. Danielson ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 79-95, p. 79.

8 Scholars agree that *Paradise Lost* owes many of its main themes to other epics and classical texts such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Hesiod's *Theogony*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* among others. See B. Kiefer Lewalski, *The genres of 'Paradise Lost'*, p. 79.

9 B. Kiefer Lewalski, *'Paradise Lost' and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2014, p. 55.

10 J.M. Evans, *'Paradise Lost' and the Genesis tradition*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968, p. 219.

11 *Ibidem*.

12 “That to the highth of this great Argument / I may assert Eternal Providence, / And justifie the wayes of God to men”.

13 See *Paradise Lost*, Book XII, ll. 466-484.

14 D. Carlson, *Adam's Fall and Milton's Intended Message in 'Paradise Lost'*, <https://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/23027?show=full>; (last accessed April 18, 2015).

2. Milton and the *Old English Genesis*

The manuscript containing the *Genesis* poem owes its denomination to the collector Francis Junius, also known as François du Jon, who bought the codex in around 1651 and published its first edition in Amsterdam in 1655. The Bodleian Library acquired the manuscript in 1678, after Junius's death¹⁵. Is it possible that Milton came into contact with the texts contained in the codex? The issue is long-standing and extremely complex, so it has given rise to a critical debate two centuries long, in which many scholars took part advancing various theories, some of which are antithetical. Some of those scholars, such as Masson, deemed plausible that Milton may have come into contact with the texts before his blindness¹⁶; others, including Conybeare¹⁷ and Lever¹⁸, have speculated that Junius himself might have talked to Milton, reporting the contents of the codex. A similar opinion is shared by Benskin and Murdoch, who stated that “it is irrelevant whether Milton's knowledge of Old English was sufficient to his have read *Genesis B*: there is no reason to suppose that Junius could not have told him of its contents”¹⁹. In this respect, von Gajsek²⁰, in her *Milton und Cædmon* cites a letter written by Junius's nephew, Issac Vossius, to his friend Nicholas Heinsius, proving that Milton and Junius were close acquaintances. Masson himself in his biography of Milton pointed out how Christopher Arnold, future professor of history at the University of Nuremberg, reported his meeting with the poet on 7 August 1651. Arnold stated that he had been admitted to the library of Selden, who was working for the Cottonian Library and had allowed him to consult some significant ancient manuscripts. In reporting his meeting with the poet, Arnold attests Milton's knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon theologians and of their comments on the Sacred Text. He also confirms the personal relationship between Milton and Junius, also stating that the latter at that time was working on an Anglo-Saxon grammar and dictionary²¹.

However, other scholars, such as Halleck for example, argue that it is not certain that Milton was aware of the existence of the *Old English Genesis*, for he was already blind three years before it was published by Junius²². In addition, Gollancz claims that the similarities between the *Genesis* poem and *Paradise Lost* are nothing but interesting coincidences²³. Moreover, there is no evidence for the possibility that Milton had abilities in Old English; Disraeli, for example, concluded that Milton

15 A.R. Rumble, *Junius manuscript*, in *Medieval England: An Encyclopedia*, P.E. Szarmach - M.T. Tavormina - J.T. Rosenthal ed., Garland Publications, New York 1998, pp. 385-386.

16 D. Masson, *The Life of John Milton*, Peter Smith, Gloucester 1965, 6, p.557.

17 J. Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, W.D. Conybeare, London 1826, p. 186.

18 J.W. Lever, '*Paradise Lost* and the Anglo-Saxon Tradition', "The Review of English Studies", 1947, 23, pp. 99-106. Lever argued that Junius and Milton had met in London and by the first half of 1651 had formed a relationship; since they shared the same interest in the poems attributed to Cædmon, Milton would definitely be aware of the contents of the manuscript and had probably been informed by Junius himself.

19 M. Benskin – B. Murdoch, *The Literary Tradition of Genesis: some Comments on J.M. Evans' "Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition"*, "Neuphilologische Mitteilungen", 76, 1975, pp. 389-403.

20 S. von Gajsek, *Milton und Cædmon*, W. Braumuller, Wien and Leipzig 1911 (Wiener Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie, 35).

21 “[...] Milton, entered readily into talk: his style is pure and his writing most terse: Of the Old English Theologians and their commentaries on the Books of Holy Scripture, the erudition of which I can attest, he seemed to me altogether to entertain [...] Francis Junius, the relative of Gerhard John Vossius, and a most cultured man, is now preparing for the press a Grammar of the Anglosaxon tongue and an Anglosaxon Dictionary, and has told me all about his doings in the kindest manner [...]”.

D. Masson, *The Life of John Milton*, 4, pp.350-351.

22 R.P. Halleck, *Halleck's New English Literature*, Project Gutenberg, 2004.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10631/pg10631.html>; (last accessed April 18, 2015).

23 I. Gollancz ed., *The Cædmon manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry, Junius 11 in the Bodleian Library. With introduction by Sir Israel Gollancz*; Oxford University Press, London 1927, p. xxxiii.

was not familiar with the language²⁴. Timmer²⁵ also shared the same view, as he considered that the correspondence between the two texts is not so striking to prove the influence of the Anglo-Saxon poem; for Timmer, Milton's familiarity with Old English is mere conjecture or at least scarce and incomplete.

On the contrary, Bolton²⁶ proposes the comparison between selected passages from the *Old English Genesis* and *Paradise Lost*; the most noteworthy compares a passage relating to the construction of the Tower of Babel (ll. 1671-1678 of *Genesis A* with ll. 692-699 of Book I of Milton's poem). The scholar claims that Milton's use of the phrase "strength and art" (l. 696), which in the poem is a *hapax legomenon*, could be the translation of the Old English word *cræft* (l. 1674, *Genesis A*). He argued that the phrase used by Milton corresponds to the definition of *cræft* given by Junius in his *Etymologicum Anglicanum*²⁷, thus attesting the poet's at least vague knowledge of Old English.

Actually, Milton's many allusions to a "native language" (i.e. Old English) in his works undoubtedly testify to his interest in Anglo-Saxon language and literature, inasmuch as in his *History of Britain* he focuses precisely on this period and his sources include Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. To this purpose, Wuelcker²⁸ compares *History of Britain* with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* edited by Wheelock (i.e. the edition of the text available in at Milton's time) and concludes that the poet's knowledge of Old English was quite rudimentary, as Milton reported verbatim the mistakes contained in Wheelock's translation into Latin of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in *History of Britain*. Wuelcker thus concludes that it is improbable that Milton could have read the *Old English Genesis* in the original language; however, he could not rule out that anyone could have read it on his behalf and reported its contents²⁹.

Consequently there is no concrete evidence for the possibility that Milton knew the texts of Junius II, since there are no documents to corroborate or refute this possibility. Nevertheless, the correspondences that will be examined in this paper support the likelihood of the influence of the Anglo-Saxon poem on *Paradise Lost*. In this regard, beyond the theories advanced by scholars so far, it is crucial to keep in mind that, as noted by Turner³⁰, during the period in which Milton was active there were some Latin translations, albeit perhaps inaccurate and unsatisfactory, of the *Old English Genesis*. Moreover, the so-called "cædmonian poems" or at least some excerpts had already been translated into Latin by Junius himself for his dictionary.

As far as Milton's knowledge of Old English is concerned, it seems useful to recall his familiarity with an extremely wide range of languages, both modern and ancient. As noted by Campbell³¹, the many languages at the poet's command included for example Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Egyptian, Dutch, and others. His interest in such languages and literatures thus offered a wealth of

24 "We have every reason to believe that Milton did not read Saxon. At that day, who did?". I. Disraeli, *Amenities of Literature*, 1, Riverside Press, Cambridge 1864, p. 58.

25 B.J. Timmer, ed., *The Later Genesis*, The Scrivener Press, Oxford 1948, p. 65.

26 W.F. Bolton, *A further echo of the Old English 'Genesis' in Milton's 'Paradise Lost'*, "Review of English Studies", 1974, 25, pp. 58-61.

27 "Quoniam tamen antiquus A. Saxonicae linguae usus obtinuit, ut 'cræft' non modo Artem, verum etiam Vim, potentiam, facultatem, efficaciam significaret e re nata [...] incidit suspicio priorem hanc vocabuli acceptionem proflixisse ex generaliore isthac significatione, qua vim facultatemque aliquid efficiendi denotat". Cfr. W.F. Bolton, *A further echo*, pp. 60-61.

28 R.P. Wuelcker, *Caedmon und Milton*, "Anglia", 1881, 4, pp. 401-405.

29 Glicksman, who comparing *Paradise Lost* and the *Genesis* poem, confirms Wuelcker's conclusions, states that for his *History of Britain* Milton had indeed consulted the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but not in the original language. See H. Glicksman, *The Sources of Milton's 'History of Britain'*, Nabu Press, s.l. 2010.

This theory is shared by Bradley, who argues that the poet, in his *History of Britain*, used some versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as sources, but probably not in the original language. See A.C. Bradley, *The 'Cædmonian' Genesis*, in *Essays and studies by members of the English Association*, A.C. Bradley ed., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1920, 4, pp. 7-29.

30 S. Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, Baudry's European Library, Paris 1840³, 3, p. 986.

31 G. Campbell, *Milton and the Languages of the Renaissance*, "SEDERI", 1993, 4, pp. 11-21.

literary sources for his texts. As Campbell points out,

Milton's command of this formidable range of languages means that the range of sources available to him is greater than that on which ordinary mortals can draw, and his life by study of the literatures written in those languages gives his poem a distinctly literary cast³².

For this reason, it seems reasonable to presume that among the many languages with which he was familiar Milton could also understand Old English and have access to Anglo-Saxon literature. As a matter of fact, as noted above, his *History of Britain* testifies to his interest in the past of his nation and in the Anglo-Saxon period, as the use of Bede and of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as sources also demonstrates. It seems therefore incorrect and improper to rule out a priori the possibility that Milton could know the *Old English Genesis* and that he could have drawn on, and have been influenced by, it during the composition of *Paradise Lost*.

3. Rewriting, reuse, and the problem of the sources

In order to compare the two poems, it is essential to bear in mind the complex issue of their sources. As mentioned above, at a first reading it is evident that the two texts share a series of *topoi* deriving from a common literary tradition. For example it is particularly evident in the physical descriptions of Hell, which in both texts occur after the defeated demons have been hurled into their new dwelling. In both poems the passage from Paradise to Hell is not just a physical movement but also emphasizes the altered relationship between God and Satan: the latter was formerly God's favourite angel and becomes a rebel exile, being expelled from His retinue and banished forever. Both poets describe the new abode of the devils as consisting of a deep and narrow ravine where absolute darkness reigns, symbolizing the punishment inflicted on the brightest of the angels. In *Genesis B* Satan, who indeed desired a higher throne, is now forced to live in a place totally in contrast to its previous condition, dominated by darkness and featuring immensely long evenings, bitter cold, icy and sharp wind, a paradoxical place where obscurity coexists with the flames of eternal torment, which also produce an acrid smoke (ll. 313-334a). In *Paradise Lost* Hell is a gloomy place as well, where darkness is not only dim and obscure in a physical sense but also from an allegorical and psychological point of view. Milton's Hell is paradoxical like the one depicted in *Genesis B*: it is both frozen and fiery, it is a place "where all life dies, death lives" (Book II, l. 624). This "conceptual" chiasmus points to the fact that in this world death means not only destruction, but is also a living principle that marks the beginning of evil in the world. However, the greatest paradox of Miltonic Hell is conveyed by the oxymoron "darkness visible" (Book I, l. 63), signifying that even though it is dark, it is weakly lit by flames. Through the blazing of fire the devils can "discover" only "sights of woe, / regions of sorrow, doleful shades" (Book I, ll. 64-65). Satan and his followers have been cast far from God and therefore far from light³³, a metaphysical light which stands for the purity of ethereal spirits (the "transcendent brightness" of Book I, l. 86).

Regarding the sources of *Genesis B*, the plot of the poem differs from the Biblical account in several aspects. As noticed by McKillop, in the poem there are elements that probably derive, either directly or in mediated form, from different sources, but are combined in "a closely knit narrative". For example, the fact that Eve is not tempted by Satan himself but by an emissary because the devil is bound in Hell and cannot move, is very unconventional and, as noted by the scholar, probably derives from the *Book of Enoch*³⁴.

The tradition of the infernal council and Satan's speech to his thanes, which is present both in

32 *Ibid.* p.12.

33 *Paradise Lost*, Book I, ll. 72-73: "In utter darkness, and their portion set, / As far removed from God and light of Heaven".

34 A.D. McKillop, *Illustrative notes on 'Genesis B'*, p. 30.

Genesis B and in *Paradise Lost*, was widespread during the 17th century and is indeed found in other previous and contemporary works, including Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* and Boccaccio's *Filocolo*, and probably derives from the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, while Satan's soliloquy has a parallel in Ambrose's *De Paradiso Liber Unus* 14:301³⁵. The scholar then observes that the presence of two antithetical trees in the Garden of Eden – the Tree of Life and that of Death – is not Biblical and could have been drawn from Ambrose and Alcuin.

Sievers instead relates some parts of the poetic *Genesis* to passages in Avitus, but with significant variations³⁶; such parallels have however been brought into question by Behaghel, who states that there is no evidence that the poet used any other source beyond the Bible and suggests that the innovations in the poem's plot were the result of the poet's imagination³⁷.

Regarding the account of the temptation of the first parents, Robinson focuses on the mitigation of the sin of Adam and Eve. In *Genesis B*, the tempter was successful in his mission because of their credulity, as they trusted a false prophet, rather than because of their pride and “caused them to disobey God unwittingly and in a sense innocently”³⁸. The scholar observes that this version of the temptation is not faithful to the Bible but is not uncommon in apocryphal texts regarding the first parents, and argues that “it is natural to conclude that the Saxon version [of the *Genesis*] is somehow indebted to that body of literature”. The scholar highlights interesting parallels in the temptation episode of the Latin *Vita Aadae et Evae*, where the fiend transforms himself into an angel of light, as well as in the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses*, where Eve relates the story of their fall to her children and states that Satan appeared to her in the form of an angel³⁹. Robinson therefore states that “[...] the Saxon poet, or more probably some predecessor, may simply have transferred to the temptation in the garden the method employed by Satan, according to the *Vita*, in the later temptation by the Tigris”⁴⁰ and subsequently assumes that the Old English poet “[...] knew some form of the apocryphal *Life of Adam and Eve*. Very likely he is still to be credited with originality in his treatment of the details of the story”⁴¹. He concludes that “by these various resemblances, as well as by the similarity in the central motive of the temptation, I am led to believe that there is some connection between the *Genesis* and the body of tradition represented in the Latin *Vita* and the Greek *Apocalypse*”⁴².

The issue regarding the sources of *Paradise Lost*, is, if possible, even more complex than in the case of *Genesis B*, for, as already noted above, Milton could access an extremely large number and variety of texts, that he assimilated and from which he took inspiration; hence the vibrant literary richness of his poem but also the difficulty in tracing the texts that have actually influenced him in his writing. Campbell lists only few works that had influence on the composition of Milton's poem, just to give an idea of the plethora of literary sources available to him and of the complexity of the issue:

Each of the languages that Milton read produced sources for *Paradise Lost*. In the modern languages, to name only one in each, Milton is said to have drawn on the French of Du Bartas' poem *La Semaine*, the Italian of Giambattista Andreini's play *L'Adamo*, the Dutch of Vondel's

35 *Ibid.* pp. 30-31.

The scholar observes that “[...] it is probable that the *Gospel of Nicodemus* is responsible for the infernal councils of both the *Old Saxon Genesis* and the 17th century scenes”, and therefore also for that of *Paradise Lost*”.

36 E. Sievers, *Der Heliand und die angelsächsische Genesis*, Nabu Press, s.l. 2014.

37 O. Behaghel, *Heliand und Genesis*, Outlook Verlag GmbH, Bremen 2012.

38 F.N. Robinson, *A note on the sources of the Old Saxon Genesis*, “Modern Philology”, October 1906, pp. 389-396.

39 *Ibid.* pp. 391-392.

As remarked by McKillop, the *Apocalypse of Moses*, like *Genesis B*, also contains the tempter's promise to Eve of a vision of glory. See A.D. McKillop, *Illustrative notes on 'Genesis B'*, p. 37.

40 F.N. Robinson, *A note on the sources of the Old Saxon Genesis*, p. 392.

41 *Ibid.* p. 393.

42 *Ibid.* p. 395.

play *Adam in Ballingschap* and the Spanish of Alonso de Acevedo's poem *Creación del Mundo*⁴³.

The scholar thus points out that Milton's command of Greek allowed him to draw on the Greek fathers (for example for the depiction of the Garden of Eden he drew heavily on the texts of the Cappadocian fathers); thanks to his familiarity with the Syriac language, he could take inspiration from the Syriac fathers, while his knowledge of Latin granted him access to the works of classical antiquity and of Christian patristic and hexameral tradition (i.e. Ambrose, to name just one of the authors)⁴⁴.

In her analysis of the genres of *Paradise Lost*, Kiefer Lewalski notes the “[...] Edenic profusion of thematic and structural elements from a great many literary genres and modes, as well as a myriad of specific allusions to major literary texts and exemplary works”⁴⁵. For example, Satan's soliloquies recall those of Macbeth and Dr. Faustus⁴⁶; in addition, Milton also includes the paradigms of various forms of tragedy, such as Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, as well as echoes of the psalms⁴⁷. Such a combination of modes and genres has led the scholar to define *Paradise Lost* as “an encyclopedia of literary forms”. As she puts it,

The mixture and multiplicity of literary forms in Milton's epic are an index of its comprehensiveness and vitality [...] they provide an important key to the interpretation of *Paradise Lost*. No poet has ever exploited them more extensively and more deliberately than Milton⁴⁸.

From this brief introduction to the sources of the two poems it is thus evident that both *Genesis B* and *Paradise Lost* are two different rewritings of the same Biblical and apocryphal episodes. As a matter of fact, both poets, even separated by centuries, created two original texts of undoubted literary richness and complexity drawing on and reusing existing – and sometimes shared – sources. The character of Satan is part of this rewriting: as this study will demonstrate, the two poets have reused Biblical and apocryphal sources, and the literary material of the tradition, creating two characters who are similar in their description as heads of their retinue, as leaders, and as exiles, but who are at the same time extremely different, especially with regard to their feelings and emotions, which make Milton's Satan much more human than the Anglo-Saxon one. This results in greater difficulty in discerning whether and to what extent Milton was actually influenced by *Genesis B*. However, the similarities between the two poems, which will be examined in this study, suggest that Milton was veritably influenced by *Genesis B* in writing his masterpiece. It is indeed very curious and interesting to notice how the two poems share the same differences from the Biblical account and the same references to apocryphal sources in similar narrative contexts. Since we are dealing with two rewritings of the same episodes, it seems incorrect to look for exact matches or for the occurrence of precise phrases in the two poems as evidence for the possible influence of the Anglo-Saxon poem on *Paradise Lost*. Similarly, it is improper to propose the absence of such cross-references as evidence for Milton's lack of knowledge of the *Old English Genesis*, as scholars have done so far. It seems more appropriate to look for echoes of, and references to, the Anglo-Saxon poem, and to search cues, imagery, and ideas that Milton may have assimilated and then rewritten and reused in a new and original way. It is therefore necessary to reconsider the two poems on the whole, focusing not only on echoes, but also on passages in which both diverge from the Biblical account in order to determine whether they share interesting

43 G. Campbell, *Milton and the Languages of the Renaissance*, p. 13.

44 G. Campbell, *Milton and the Languages of the Renaissance*, pp. 16-17.

45 B. Kiefer Lewalski, *The Genres of Paradise Lost*, p. 79.

46 *Ibid.* p. 80.

47 *Ibid.* pp. 86-89.

48 *Ibid.* p. 92.

similarities.

For example, both poets repeat the story of the fall of the rebel angels twice: in the *Old English Genesis* it is reported both in *Genesis A* and in *Genesis B*, while in the Miltonic poem it is told briefly in Book I, when the whole subject is presented: Man's fall and its prime cause, the temptation of Satan, who, with his army of faithful angels had rebelled against God, was defeated and was hurled down with his crew. The account is then repeated by Raphael, who warns Adam about the fiend's attempt to make him disobey his Creator. When the first parent asks who this enemy is, the angel tells the story of the war caused by Satan and the fall of the rebel angels⁴⁹.

Another similarity regards the two different physical shapes of the tempter. As already noted, the text of *Genesis B* follows an apocryphal tradition and the emissary chosen by Satan to tempt the first parents appears in the shape of an angel of light⁵⁰. However, before the temptation he takes the shape of a snake by means of devilish craft⁵¹. In addition, in one of the illuminations that accompany the poem, the tempter appears as a serpent, while in some others he is depicted as an angel. In Milton's poem too, the fiend assumes both forms: in Book V Eve tells Adam of her dream in which Satan appears as an angel standing next "to the tree / of interdicted Knowledge", describing him as "one shap'd and wing'd like one of those from Heav'n" (ll. 51-55). In Book IX, instead, Satan is described as the serpent of Biblical tradition as he appears to Eve, approaches her, and persuades her to eat the forbidden fruit⁵²:

For now, and since first break of dawne the Fiend,
Meer Serpent in appearance, forth was come,
And on his Quest, where likeliest he might finde
The onely two of Mankinde, but in them
The whole included Race, his purposd prey (ll.412-416).

It should then be added that Eve's dream is not the only case in which Satan appears as an angel: as a matter of fact, when he goes to Eden he takes the form of a cherub, so he can talk to the angel Uriel, the guardian, without being recognized⁵³, pretending to feel the desire to see God's latest creation (i.e. the first parents), and thus obtaining Uriel's permission to enter.

In addition, the fact that both poets somehow lighten the sin of Adam and Eve, albeit in different ways, is particularly relevant. Given the similarities between *Genesis B* and *Paradise Lost* (some of which have already been mentioned, others will be highlighted in the analysis of the characterization of Satan) and given that Milton had the extraordinary ability of drawing on various sources, thus implementing a personal and original rewriting, it is plausible that he derived the *felix culpa* topic from *Genesis B*. Consequently, it is possible to consider the *felix culpa* topic as part of his rewriting process, as it may indeed derive from the account of the progenitors' temptation in the Anglo-Saxon poem. Milton might have been struck by the unconventional treatment of the episode so that he lightened the sin of the first parents, but in a completely different way. Indeed in the Old English poem Adam and Eve were deceived because they trusted a false prophet, so their sin was not pride but credulity, as attested by Adam's words to Eve at ll. 797-799b, where he stresses the tempter's fault: "þær þu þam ne hierde þe unc þisne hearm geræd / þæt wit waldendes word forbræcon, / heofoncyninges"⁵⁴. The poet confirms Satan's fault at ll. 822b-823: "hie wæs geweorc

49 See also A.D. McKillop, *Illustrative Notes on Genesis B*, p. 28.

50 At ll. 538b-539 Adam tells the tempter: "þu gelic ne bist / ænegum his engla þe ic ær geseah" ("You are not like / any of his angels that I have ever seen").

51 Ll. 491-492, "Wearp hine þa on wyrmes lic and wand him þa ymbutan / þone deaðes beam þurh deofles cræft" ("Then he cast himself into a serpent's body and wound himself / around the tree of death through demon's craft").

52 See also A.D. McKillop, *Illustrative Notes on Genesis B*, p. 35.

53 Book III, l. 636, "And now a stripling Cherube he appears".

54 "If you had not listened to that one who counseled this harm to us / so that we two the Lord's word broke / [the word] of the king of Heaven".

godes / þeah heo þa on deofles cræft bedroren wurde”⁵⁵. The fact that he has chosen the verb “bedréosan” is particularly relevant, as it means both “deceive” and “deprive”, thus conveying the idea that Eve was not guilty for eating the fruit, as the devil, through his craft, had made her somehow unconscious.

On the other hand, in *Paradise Lost* the Original Sin is not merely a catastrophe because Man will suffer pain and death, but it is also positive, as it gives mankind the chance to experience God's providence and mercy and to redeem themselves through true faith and repentance. Through the Original Sin God will allow the coming of Christ the Redeemer and thus the salvation of humankind, as the Archangel Michael foretells while consoling Adam⁵⁶. The *felix culpa* topic is summarized well in Adam's reply, as he is relieved by the Archangel's words and even rejoices because his sin will allow mankind to experience God's grace. Through a series of opposites

the first man stresses the fact that from his deplorable sin much more good for humankind will derive:

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Then that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! full of doubt I stand,
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By mee done and occasiond, or rejoyce
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
To God more glory, more good will to Men
From God, and over wrauth grace shall abound (Book XII, ll. 469-478).

4. Different ways of representing Satan

The choice of focusing this comparative analysis on Satan is due to the fact that he is the protagonist and the most complex figure in both poems. Regarding the Old English poem, the characterisation of Satan appears more interesting in *Genesis B* than in *Genesis A*, as in the latter the methods of the chronicle have been employed and the poem's style can be considered as more narrative, whereas the poet of *Genesis B* concentrates on Satan's motives and actions⁵⁷ and describes him as the evil culprit for the Original Sin, who, through his cunning, has deceived Eve and led the first parents to eat the forbidden fruit. Moreover, as Molinari has noted⁵⁸, in *Genesis A* the rebel angels are seen as a plurality in which Lucifer's merit is represented only by the fact that he is the first to conceive the idea of rebelling. He cannot be considered a protagonist; he is just one of the characters, while the very protagonist is God's wrath. In *Genesis B*, however, Satan is not one among others but is the chief protagonist: all events are determined by his reactions and his purposes. He is a character qualified by a very complex narrative and psychological dynamic. In *Paradise Lost* Satan is the most powerful figure and, as Kaiter and Sandiuc have pointed out, he

55 “She was God's creation, / though she then through devil's craft had been deceived”.

56 “[...]; and thence shall come,

When this worlds dissolution shall be ripe,
With glory and power to judge both quick and dead
To judge th' unfaithful dead, but to reward
His faithful, and receive them into bliss,
Whether in Heav'n or Earth, for then the Earth
Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
Then this of Eden, and far happier daies” (Book XII, ll. 458-465).

57 A.D. McKillop, *Illustrative notes on 'Genesis B'*, p. 28.

58 M.V. Molinari, *La caduta degli angeli ribelli: considerazioni sulla 'Genesi B'*, “AION Filologia germanica”, 28-29, 1985-86. pp. 517-539.

is “energy and passion incarnated”, considering that he still struggles even after having been defeated⁵⁹. As the scholars have observed, his character is extremely contradictory and ambivalent in that he has a plurality of meanings: he is multifaceted and often contradicts himself, being both hero and villain, rebelling against God's tyranny but behaving as a tyrant⁶⁰. Satan is the most interesting character of *Paradise Lost* in that he is the most developed character, not only in terms of the rich literary style, but also in terms of characterisation. As Carey puts it

As a dissimulator, he displays imagination in ways that are unavailable to God or the other good characters. Unlike him, they do not depend on lies, so the constant imaginative effort by which Satan sustains himself is foreign to them. They remain, from the viewpoint of imagination, relatively undeveloped beings⁶¹.

Even at a first reading of the poems (despite both accounting for the fall of the rebel angels, their revenge, its fulfilment in the temptation of the first parents, and their expulsion from Paradise) it soon becomes clear that the two poets have employed different strategies in the characterization of Satan. In *Genesis B* he is treated as a static figure, in that he never changes his mind and keeps pursuing his evil goal without hesitation; he is coherent and linear, as he never evolves; he is a flat character, also considering the fact that he is described concisely and schematically. The poet focuses on Satan's evil actions and on his sense of deprivation: he is both an evildoer who has rebelled against his Lord and devotes himself to take his revenge against Him, trying and succeeding in corrupting humankind, and an exile who has lost God's favour and has been banished from Heaven. In contrast, Milton's Satan is dynamic, as throughout the poem he changes attitude, almost repents for his rebellion, regrets what he has lost and almost hesitates in his temptation mission, as long as he is moved by the sight of Man.

Milton devotes a good portion of the first books of the poem to the description and characterization of Satan, who changes significantly from Book I to his final appearance in Book X. As a matter of fact, at first he is described as an imposing titan and as a respected and trusted leader, but throughout the poem he undergoes various metamorphoses, transforming gradually into a smaller and smaller creature (for example, a cormorant and a toad), and in the temptation account he takes the shape of a serpent. The nature of Milton's Satan is as paradoxical as that of Hell. Whereas his new dwellingplace is “darkness visible”, he has “darkened so, yet shone” (Book I, l. 599), meaning that there is a residue of his former divine light within him even though he personifies darkness (and consequently evil). His darkness is both physical and psychological, but also allegorical, for obscurity implies distance from God as well as from his former great status. Although he has deep scars on his face due to the battle against God, his facial expression still betrays his pride and his need for revenge (Book I, ll. 601-604).

Satan's complexity is also due to the fact that he is a “creature of dynamic tensions”: he is well aware of his conflicting passions, as much as he is often involved in inner monologues, in which, through self-criticism, the tension between his inner feelings and his outward appearance becomes clear⁶². From this point of view, Carey⁶³ has highlighted the character's “fictional depth”, to which different aspects contribute: his intimate struggles, the fact that his habitual mode is dissimulation, and that he existed and exists in a number of different modes that have to do both with his actions and with his metamorphoses. The scholar has defined the devil “not a single concept but a trimorph”, as he is depicted as existing and acting in three major modes: he was an archangel, but

59 E. Kaiter, C. Sandiuc, *Milton's Satan: hero or anti-hero?*, International Conference of Scientific Paper AFASES 2011, Brasov 26-28 May 2011.

60 *Ibidem*.

61 J. Carey, *Milton's Satan*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, D. Danielson ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989, pp.131-145.

62 E. Kaiter, C. Sandiuc, *Milton's Satan: hero or anti-hero?*

63 J. Carey, *Milton's Satan*, p.134.

after his rebellion becomes the prince of devils and then turns into a serpent in order to tempt Adam and Eve. Describing the devil's soliloquy (Book IV, ll. 32-113), Carey has pointed out that

[...] in it Satan concedes his own criminality, and his own responsibility for his fall. He oscillates between remorse and defiance. He confesses that his rebellion was completely unjustifiable [...], even Satan [...] admits God was right. But paradoxically this admission redeems Satan in the reader's eyes, so that the response elicited is, as usual with Satan, ambivalent⁶⁴.

In Milton's poem the figure of Satan undergoes a progressive deterioration: due to his serious sin of pride, he, who once was the brightest and most beloved archangel and dwelt in Heaven, becomes a revolting and frightful creature which crawls on the ground. Milton gives Satan the status of the tragic hero, providing him with a vivid language characterized by a lively rhetoric, in contrast with God, whose vocabulary is rather dull, flat and devoid of metaphors⁶⁵. His condition of epic hero, together with his inner conflicts and the fact that the genres converging in *Paradise Lost* include epics and tragedy, explain Milton's theatrical style, especially regarding Satan. However, Milton depicts him also as an anti-hero, given the fragility of his heroic virtues and their susceptibility to demonic perversion⁶⁶. Thus Milton's characterisation of Satan is absolutely new, as he embodies a new kind of hero. As Kaiter and Sandiuc put it

Milton does not accept the standard interpretation of the heroic figure, he reinvents it. He creates a character who is at once someone we tend to appreciate as heroic, and someone we want to see defeated. [...] Milton's definition of heroism is not physical bravery or military adventure, and therefore Satan is not the hero, but rather an expression of the theological heroic ideal by opposition [...]. He is the antagonist who drives the plot with his machinations, the great adversary who we are to loath for his rebellious nature and a character with a great vital force of his own, even if it lies in the direction of evil⁶⁷.

Furthermore, Milton's approach to the character of Satan is different if compared to that of the Old English poet, in that at the beginning of *Paradise Lost* Satan and his followers are already in Hell. We do not know anything about his past as an Archangel and have to wait to learn about it from later dialogues between the fallen angels and especially from Satan's monologues. In using this device in *Paradise Lost*, Milton was aiming to make his story and his protagonist more dramatic and was following the example of Virgil, who did likewise in composing the *Aeneid*. In addition, the fact that Satan's prelapsarian condition is never shown, but often alluded to by way of flashback contributes to the character's fictional depth, as it gives him a hidden dimension and past⁶⁸.

A crucial difference between *Genesis B* and *Paradise Lost* that ought to be highlighted before analysing the characterisation of Satan concerns the motives of his revenge. In the first poem the fall of Satan is placed between the creation of Man and his fall, and is due to the Archangel's pride and his attempt of subverting Heaven's hierarchy; in the latter Satan's fall is placed before the creation of Man: he falls because of his envy towards Christ and Man, who has been created as a substitute for him. An aspect that is new in *Paradise Lost* is that, in his soliloquy, Satan seems to blame God for having given him such great power because this had "raised / [his] ambition" (Book IV, ll. 58-61). His motivations are confirmed by Raphael, who names them as "pride", "malice", "disdain" and "contempt" (Book V, ll. 665-671) but adds that Satan felt "impaired" (l. 665), for his place had been usurped by Adam.

64 *Ibidem*.

65 R. Flanagan, *The Riverside Milton*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1998, p. 321.

66 B. Kiefer Lewalski, *'Paradise Lost' and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms*, p. 55.

67 E. Kaiter, C. Sandiuc, *Milton's Satan: hero or anti-hero?*

68 J. Carey, *Milton's Satan*, p. 133.

4.1 Prelapsarian Satan

The descriptions of the social relationship between God and His angels in the two poems share some interesting similarities, which come on the side of possible influence of the Old English poem on Milton.

In *Genesis B* the feudal relationship between God and the angels is conceived with particular reference to the *comitatus*, whose basis is obligation⁶⁹: angels are considered vassals and have to serve their Lord; for their service they receive a reward (“lean”). God is a generous lord who, after creating them with His own hands⁷⁰, gives his thanes several gifts. The first one is “gewit” (“intelligence”, l. 250b) and the second one is establishing them in bliss⁷¹. However, since Lucifer is God's pupil, he has received more gifts than the other angels. The Almighty made him stronger and gave him power to govern so that he was second only to God. Moreover, He made him “hwit” (“bright, l. 254) and gave him a beautiful form⁷² so that he was like the shining stars (l. 256a). Lucifer should have given “loath” (“lof”, l. 256b) to his Lord, he should have paid “service” (“geongordom”, l. 267), appreciated the favour (“dream”, l. 257) he enjoyed in Heaven, and thanked God for all the gifts he had received. However, not only did Lucifer fail to fulfil these conditions, he in fact turned himself into a “worse condition” (l. 259) and began to strive against God. Moreover, it is interesting to note that all his qualities (which are the gifts of God) are restated by him in his first monologue (ll. 278-291), in which he invites the rebel angels to battle. In the first part of his speech (ll. 278-283) he praises himself and his qualities, forgetting that God made him like that. He cannot find a reason to serve God and insists on his refusal to subject himself to Him⁷³. His “pride” (“ofermod”, l. 262) makes him compare himself to God and in the second part of his monologue (ll. 284-291) he is the lord and the rebel angels are his “followers” (“geneatas”, l. 284). His newly gained *comitatus* is made of “determined warriors” (“hæleþas heardmode”, l. 285), “valiant warriors” (“rofe rincas”, l. 286), who will not fail him in battle (l. 284b); they are loyal retainers who are faithful in their soul and such “comrades” (“folcgestellan”, l. 287) that he is convinced he can hope to rule Heaven. His speech culminates in the resolution that he will no longer serve God:

[...] swa me þæt riht ne þinceð
þæt ic oleccan awiht þurfe
gode æfter gode ænegum. Ne wille ic leng his geongra wurþan⁷⁴ (ll. 289b-291).

Thus, the Archangel's rebellion consists in his refusal to accept the heavenly hierarchy and, as a consequence, God's superiority. He claims his independence as a lord and praises his own band of followers⁷⁵.

In *Paradise Lost* the story of Lucifer's rebellion is narrated in the fifth book when Raphael, the “winged Hierarch” (l. 468), is sent to Paradise by God with the task of warning Adam that an enemy will try to seduce him into disobeying his Maker. When asked by Adam who this enemy is, the Archangel recounts the story of the war in Heaven caused by Satan and the resulting fall of the rebel angels. In Raphael's account they were “glorious” and “perfect” until they were unfaithful to their Lord⁷⁶.

69 A.N. Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, p. 117.

70 *Gen.* l. 251a: “and mid his handum gesceop”.

71 *Gen.* l. 252a: “gesett hæfde he hie swa gesæliglice” .

72 *Gen.* l. 255a: “swa wynlic wæs his wæstm on heofonum”.

73 See ll. 278-279a and ll. 282b-283.

74 “So I do not think it is right / that I need to flatter in any way / God to [obtain] advantage. I do not want to be his servant”.

75 See also A.N. Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, p. 123.

76 “[...] how without remorse / The ruin of so many glorious once / And perfect while they stood” (Book V, ll. 566-

In Milton's poem the political organization of Heaven is very similar to that of *Genesis B* since God is an “all-bounteous king” (l. 639) sitting on His throne like the Lord described in the Old English poem, and His heavenly court is made of angels, who are “Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers” (l. 601), citing, among other things, the Bible (Colossians 1:16). However, a significant difference is that Milton's concept of Heaven was clearly influenced by the ruling order of his time and therefore God is described as a Renaissance monarch whose Son is “his great vicegerent” (l. 609). However, in the second book the poet describes the relationship developing the metaphor of vassalage through the influence of his time, culminating in the metaphor of colonialism and slavery. Satan describes the fallen angels as “the vassals of his [God's] anger” (l. 90) and the Lord as “their Conqueror” (l. 208). In Satan's view Hell has thus become his “empire” as opposed to the Kingdom of Heaven, whereas Beelzebub in his speech (ll. 310-378) states that God has not lost control over the devils after their banishment from Heaven. On the contrary, He has extended His power to Hell and still rules them. In this sense, God has expanded His empire and Hell has become a colony over which He rules with His iron sceptre (ll. 323-328). Devils after their fall are “enslaved” and they suffer “custody severe / and stripes” (ll. 333-334). As in the case of *Genesis B*, Lucifer in *Paradise Lost* was, before his fall, “the first Archangel, great in power, / in favour, in pre-eminence” (ll. 660-661). As already noted, the cause of the revolt is different from that of *Genesis B*, however, in that Lucifer is moved by his envy towards the Son of God (ll.661-662)⁷⁷, as he was proclaimed by the Father the “head” and “Lord” of the angels, who shall kneel before him:

This day I have begot whom I declare
 My only Son, and on this holy Hill
 Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
 At my right hand; your Head I him appoint;
 And by my Self have sworn to him shall bow
 All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess him Lord [...] (Book V, ll. 603-608).

God's proclamation reminds us of Satan's first soliloquy in *Genesis B* and of his refusal to bow before the Lord, which is the emblem of his refusal to obey:

[...] Ic hæbbe geweald micel
 to gyrwanne godlecran stol,
 hearran on heofne. Hwy sceal ic æfter his hyldo ðeowian,
 bugan him swilces geongordomes? Ic mæg wesan god swa he (ll. 280b-283)⁷⁸.

Kneeling is a common action to demonstrate submission to a lord or a king; however, it is interesting to note how Milton at l. 607 employs the verb “to bow”, which shares the same meaning and root with “bugan” at l. 283a in the Old English poem, thus suggesting the possibility that Milton might have had *Genesis B* in mind when he wrote the fifth book of *Paradise Lost*.

Another extremely interesting cue to the influence of the Old English poem, which, however, does not deal with Satan, is contained in Book V as well, in which Raphael, before temptation, warns Adam against the fiend, invites him to obey God, and defines obedience as “our voluntarie service” (l. 529). The noun “service” recalls the Old English terms “giongorscipe” (l. 249, where it is used to affirm that the ten orders of angels created by God have to follow His rules) and “geongordom”, both of which, as already observed, mean “vassalage”, “subjection”, “obedience” and also

568).

77 In this regard, it should be noted how a substantial difference between the two poems is that in *Genesis B* only God is mentioned, while the Son does not appear.

78 “I have a great power / to adorn a more beautiful throne / higher in Heaven. Why do I have to serve Him [to have] His favour, / to bow before Him in such a subservience? I can be God as well as He”.

“service”⁷⁹. In particular, “geongordom” occurs four times in the poem, three of which in relation to Satan's refusal to obey God (ll. 267, 283, 662), and, curiously enough, once (l. 743) during the temptation, when the tempter, disguised as an angel, invites Eve to pay her “service”, obeying God's order to eat the fruit from the Tree of Death. However, in *Paradise Lost*, the first parents' obedience is “voluntary” because God has provided them with free will, as stated by Raphael at l. 527, where he reminds to Adam that they are “by nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate”.

Book IV in *Paradise Lost* contains one of Satan's soliloquies (ll. 32-113): he is journeying towards Eden to take his revenge and falls into doubt. He recalls his condition before the fall and almost seems to repent, he even curses himself, but eventually confirms his evil purpose. The first lines (ll. 37-47) of the monologue describe his doubts, his nostalgia for his previous condition and his repentance, as he acknowledges that praising and thanking God for His gifts was not such a high price to pay:

[...] 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 Spheare;
Till Pride and worse Ambition threw me down
Warring in Heav'n against Heav'ns matchless King:
Ah wherefore! he deservd 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.
What could be less then to afford him praise,
The easiest recompence, and pay him thanks, [...].

This passage shares striking similarities with ll. 254b-259 of *Genesis B*, which, as noted above, describe Satan's condition before the fall and his relationship with God:

[...] hæfde he hine swa hwitne geworhtne,
swa wynlic wæs his wæstm on heofonum: þæt him com from weroda drihtne.
gelic wæs he þam leohtum steorrum. Lof sceolde he drihtnes wyrcean,
dyran sceolde he his dreamas on heofonum and sceolde his drihtne þancian
þæs leanes þe he him on þam leohte gescerede þonne læte he his hine lange wealdan.
Ac he awende hit him to wyrсан þinge, ongan him winn up ahebban [...]⁸⁰.

As can be noticed, both passages allude to Satan's prelapsarian condition, even though they refer to different narrative contexts, and reveal an interesting series of cross-references. For example, the relationship between Satan and the Lord is defined once more “giongorscipe” (*Gen.B* l. 249), which parallels “service” and “subjection” (*PL*. ll. 45 and 50); the “bright eminence” of l. 45 of *Paradise Lost* reminds us of the reference to Satan's brightness in *Genesis B* (“hwit”, l. 254b) and his comparison with the stars (l. 256) hints at the fact that in Milton's poem the Sun reminds Satan of his former condition (ll. 37-39). The goodness of Milton's God, who does not reproach his retainers (ll. 44-45) recalls the joys (“dreamas”, l. 257) experienced in Heaven by the Anglo-Saxon Satan, whereas the “reward” (“lean”, l. 258) offered by the Lord to His thegns in the *Genesis* poem is mentioned twice by the Miltonic devil with reference to the remuneration he should have paid to God (“return”, l. 42 and “recompence”, l. 47). Moreover, “lof” (“to praise”, l. 256) parallels “praise” in *Paradise Lost* (l. 46), as well as the verb “þancian” (“to thank”, l. 257) corresponds to

79 See also the Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon dictionary.

80 “[...] He [God] had him so bright created / so beautiful was his appearance in Heaven that came to him from the Lord's retinue, / he was like the bright stars. He should have praised the Lord / he should have taken care of his joy in Heaven and should have thanked his Lord / for the rewards that He in that light bestowed, until He allowed him to govern for a long time / but he turned into a worse condition and started to heave up the conflict [...]”.

the verb phrase “pay him thanks” (l. 47). These cross-references lead us to believe that all these similarities cannot be a mere coincidence but demonstrate that Milton was familiar with *Genesis B*, or that someone had accurately reported to him at least part of its contents. In addition, the accuracy of the correspondences of terms referred to key concepts of the *comitatus*, such as joy, praise, gratitude and rewards, lead us, at least concerning these passages, to reject the hypothesis that the similarities between the two poems can be attributed to the use of shared literary sources; on the contrary, they provide evidence for the actual influence of *Genesis B* on Milton, who, impressed by the text, reused some imagery and ideas to describe Lucifer's condition before his rebellion. This is confirmed by other cross-references found in the lines that are adjacent to the passages analysed above. In *Genesis B*, ll.262-264 refer to the moment in which Lucifer's pride grows and he vaunts:

[...] his engyl ongan ofermod wesan.
 ahof hine wið his hearran, sohte hetespræce,
 gylpword ongean, nolde gode þeowian⁸¹.

In *Paradise Lost* the devil, regretful for what he has lost due to his revolt, wonders whether God could forgive him for his actions. Since the only way to obtain His forgiveness is subjection, he confirms himself in evil, asserting that he cannot retreat the promises and vaunts by which he has seduced the rebel angels. In ll. 79-88 of the monologue Milton insists on Satan's boasting, so that he reiterates the concept three times: while in *Genesis B*, the fiend is culpable for “gylpword” and “hetespræce”, in *Paradise Lost* “boasting” (l. 85) and “boast” (l. 87) are accompanied by “vaunts” (l. 84):

[...] is there no place
 Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?
 None left but by submission; and that word
 Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
 Among the Spirits beneath, whom I seduc'd
 With other promises and other vaunts
 Then to submit, boasting I could subdue
 Th' Omnipotent. Ay me, they little know
 How dearly I abide that boast so vaine,
 Under what torments inwardly I groane: [...].

Satan's statement “I could subdue / Th' Omnipotent” (ll. 85-86) reaffirms his pride stating his superiority over God, thus confirming his subversion of Heaven's social hierarchy. As already noted, such undermining of the social system is also found in *Genesis B*, in which, at l. 283, Satan asserts that he “may be God as well as He”, and confirms his superiority in “power and strength” (ll. 268b-261a)⁸². As in *Genesis B*, Satan in *Paradise Lost* claims “equality with God”, but he has gained his band of followers by deceiving them “with calumnious art” and by pretending to consult them on how to receive their newly established king, i.e. Christ (Book V, ll. 762-771).

Concerning the war between Lucifer's and God's armies, the two poems differ significantly. In the fifth and sixth books of *Paradise Lost* there is a detailed account of the battle between good and bad angels through the words of the Archangel Raphael who warns Adam against the wiles of Satan. In the fifth book Raphael tells of the events leading up to the rebellion; in the sixth book, Raphael gives an account of the battle itself, describing Lucifer, as he appears in the battlefield, as a

81 “[...] His angel began to be proud / he raised himself up against his Lord, sought hate-speech / he began [to speak] boast-words. He did not want to serve God”.

82 “þuhte him sylfum / þæt he mægyn and cræft maran hæfde / þonne se halga god habban mihte / folcgestælna” (“He thought of himself / that he may have more power and strength / than the holy God may have / in his retainers”).

magnificent leader sitting on his “gorgeous throne”, surrounded by bright angels and golden shields (l. 104). When he stands up he resembles a tower (l. 110) and is compared to a Titan. However, the image of the tower represents not only Lucifer’s titanic stature but is also a symbol of his power over his followers. Lucifer is described as a brave untamed warrior (ll. 246-248), defining his enterprise “the strife of glory” (l. 290); he endures the battle against God's army but is eventually defeated.

Genesis B, on the other hand, contains no account of the battle of the angels. The only suggestions of the war are the reference to warriors in Satan's soliloquy, the mentioning of the woe caused by his rebellion against God at l. 296, and “gewinn” (“strife”, l. 323). Apart from this, in *Genesis B* the essence of Satan's revolt is contained in his soliloquy, which is immediately followed by the punishment scene.

4.2 Falling angels

In *Genesis B* God pronounces his sentence on the rebel angels as soon as he has heard the words of defiance uttered by Lucifer in the above-mentioned soliloquy. Their rebellion has caused God great wrath⁸³ and their punishment is to be “the greatest torment of all”⁸⁴. They are to suffer the loss of God's favour, which of course means exile. They are “banished” (“acwæð”, l. 304) and sink into the eternal torment of Hell. Their leader Satan is sent “hurling down from his high throne”⁸⁵. They fall for three days and three nights (so far is Hell from Heaven) and are transformed into devils. The poet repeats the cause of this punishment at ll. 326b-327a: “forþon hie þegnscipe / godes forgyndon”⁸⁶. Given the gnomic purpose of the poem, this repetition can be understood as a warning to the reader against the consequences of committing such a sin. Part of God’s punishment lies in assigning a new name to the leader of the rebel angels. Henceforth he is to be known as “Satan”⁸⁷ who is to govern his newly conquered kingdom instead of striving in Heaven against God⁸⁸.

As mentioned above, the *Junius II* manuscript includes a number of illustrations depicting scenes from the *Old English Genesis*. It is now interesting to compare how the scene of the punishment of the rebel angels is depicted in two of them with the manner in which Milton described the same scene, as it may provide more clues about the influence of the Anglo-Saxon poem on *Paradise Lost*. The illumination of p.16⁸⁹ of the *Junius II* manuscript⁹⁰ depicts the fall of the rebel angels. The angels' bodies are falling down into the eternal abyss; some of them have already been changed, so that they preserve only their wings and some even have a tail. Hell is a monster, a feral creature, or a big fish with jaws wide open ready to swallow the fallen angels. At the bottom of the drawing Satan lies bound hand and foot in chains, reaffirming his eternal imprisonment already described by the poetic text.

83 L. 299b: “þa wearð se mihtiga gebolgen” (“then became the powerful [God] angry”); l. 302a: “gram wearð him se goda on his mode” (“the Good [God] became [Satan's] enemy in his heart”).

84 Ll. 296-297a: “and sceolde his wite habban, / ealra morðra mæst” (“and should have his punishment / the greatest torment of all”).

85 L.300b: “wearp hine of þan hean stole”.

86 “Because they despised God's service”.

87 Ll. 344-345a: “cwæð se hehsta hatan sceolde / satan siððan” (“the Highest said henceforth he should have been named Satan”).

88 Ll. 345b-346: “het hine þære sweartan helle / grundes gyman, nalles wið god winnan” (“He ordered to him to take care of the gloomy hell / of the abyss instead of striving against God”).

89 The lettering “p. 16” is to be referred to the foliation proposed by the Bodleian Library, which conserves the *Junius II* manuscript.

90 A high-quality photographic reproduction of the illustration, scanned directly from the original, can be viewed at the “Early Manuscripts at Oxford University” section hosted by the Oxford Digital Library web site, at the following url: <http://image.ox.ac.uk/images/bodleian/msjunius11/16.jpg>; (last accessed April 18, 2015).

In *Paradise Lost* after the defeat of the rebel angels “a spacious gap disclosed / into the wasteful deep” (Book VI, ll. 861-862). They look down and see hell, which is described as “the monstrous sight / [which] strook them with horror backward” (ll.862-863); such a dreadful sight is clearly referred to the fact that they see Leviathan, the monster which represents Hell, but clearly reminds of the illumination, where, as already noted, hellmouth is a monster which actually swallows its prisoners.

The rebel angels throw themselves into this gap because what awaited them in Heaven would be far worse than the torment of hell (ll. 862-866) . Their fall lasts nine days. Hell is personified, being described as a monster which opens its mouth in order to devour the rebel angels:

[...] Hell at last
Yawning received them whole, and on them closed;
Hell, their fit habitation, fraught with fire
Unquenchable, the house of woe and pain. (Book 6, ll. 874-877)

The quoted passages show how Milton's lines appear like a written description of the *Junius 11* illustration. The same metaphor is found also in Satan's soliloquy, when he repents for having rebelled against God and curses himself. He has no hope and states that he himself is hell, and wherever he would go, he would see only the infernal abyss ready to swallow him once again (Book IV, ll. 73-78):

Me miserable! which way shall I flie
Infinite wrath, and infinite despaire?
Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threatning to devour me opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.

The other illumination which shares some similarities with *Paradise Lost* is found at p. 3⁹¹ of the codex and occupies the whole folio⁹². It entails four different temporal levels: in the first register the angelic retinue pay homage to Lucifer, who is depicted standing next to his magnificent palace, handing Him gifts. At the centre of the second register Lucifer stands among his retainers, who honour him. He can be distinguished from the other angels because he is taller than them and wears a decorated crown. In the third register a battle scene is portrayed, for God retaliates for the suffered wrong. Indeed a male figure representing God is holding a scroll and three spears. Lucifer is portrayed again surrounded by angels bearing palm branches. In the fourth and last register God hurls Satan, his comrades (now transformed into devils), and the roof of their palace down into Hell⁹³. The plummeting roof symbolizes the fall of the rebel angels and the destruction of the palace that Lucifer had dared to build in Heaven. Similarly, the transformation of the angels into demons with tails and horns marks the transition from the beauty and light of Heaven to the darkness of monstrous Hell.

At the bottom of the illustration, in the last register, Hell is depicted once again as a big monster opening its mouth to receive the fallen angels. Satan, now turned into a devil with long claws, is shown bound in chains by neck, hands, and feet inside the jaws of Hell.

Milton's account of Christ defeating the rebels by means of lightning reminds us of the central figure in the third register of the drawing holding the three spears which are similar to arrows. As a

91 The lettering “p. 3” is to be referred to the foliation proposed by the Bodleian Library.

92 A high-quality photographic reproduction of the illustration, scanned directly from the original, is available at the “Early Manuscripts at Oxford University” section hosted by the Oxford Digital Library web site, at the following url: <http://image.ox.ac.uk/images/bodleian/msjunius11/3.jpg>; (last accessed April 18, 2015).

93 B. Raw, *The Probable Derivation of Most of the Illustrations in Junius 11 from an Illustrated Old Sax Genesis*, “Anglo-Saxon England”, 5, 1976, pp. 133-148.

matter of fact, in the sixth book Milton describes God in the battlefield holding “ten thousand thunders”, while the four loyal Archangels employ “His arrows” against the enemies:

[...]. Full soon
Among them he arrived; in his right hand
Grasping ten thousand thunders, which he sent
Before him, such as in their souls infix'd
Plagues: They, astonished, all resistance lost,
All courage; down their idle weapons dropt:
O'er shields, and helms, and helmed heads he rode
Of Thrones and mighty Seraphim prostrate,
That wish'd the mountains now might be again
Thrown on them, as a shelter from his ire.
Nor less on either side tempestuous fell
His arrows, from the fourfold-visag'd Four
Distinct with eyes, and from the living wheels
Distinct alike with multitude of eyes;
One Spirit in them ruled; and every eye
Glared lightning, and shot forth pernicious fire
Among the accursed, that wither'd all their strength,
And of their wonted vigour left them drain'd,
Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fallen". (ll. 834-852)

The passage illustrates well the surrender of the rebel angels who suffer the consequences of God's wrath: all the Empyrean trembles except for the throne of God; Christ, described as a staunch leader, defeats the rioters by hurling ten thousand thunderbolts with his right hand (symbolizing divine justice), which burn in their souls like sores. A rain of arrows (l. 845) and fire (l. 849) hits the rebel angels, leaving them powerless (ll. 851-852).

In conclusion, the similarity between what is depicted in the two *Junius II* illustrations and the descriptions in *Paradise Lost*, even though it could be due to the use of shared sources, seems so striking that it has to lead one to wonder whether Milton saw the illustrations before becoming blind or whether they were described to him by Junius⁹⁴.

4.3 Postlapsarian Satan

Another similarity shared by the two poems is Satan's perception of his new postlapsarian condition. Like the poet of *Genesis B*, Milton depicts the devils' permanence in Hell as an imprisonment, for he describes their dwelling as “a dungeon horrible, on all sides round” (Book I, l. 61); this idea is reasserted at l. 71, where the term “prison” is used. Although Milton's Satan still retains his majestic stature, he is free to wander and to fly to the earth in order to corrupt mankind, and (unlike the Satan in *Genesis B*) is not bound in chains, bondage is suggested when he is described as lying “in adamantine chains and penal fire” (l. 48). Even though such bounds are a metaphor for the devil's new condition, they could be taken as indication that Milton had read *Genesis B* and was influenced by it when he composed the lines describing Satan's infernal dwelling-place.

As a matter of fact, as far as bondage is concerned, striking similarities can be noticed by comparing Satan's speech to the rebel angels in Hell in *Genesis B* and Beelzebub's declaration in Book II of *Paradise Lost*. In the Anglo-Saxon poem the devil insists on his being fettered, as his

⁹⁴ In this regard, it should be noticed that Conybeare had suggested that someone, perhaps Junius himself, might have described the contents of the manuscript to John Milton. See J. Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 186.

tone is elegiac and bondage is one of the tropes used in Old English elegies to describe the condition of the exile. In this case Satan, now banished from Heaven and regretting his previous condition, has actually been enchained:

Ac licgað me ymbe irenbenda,
rideð racentan sal. Ic eom rices leas.
habbað me swa hearde helleclommas
fæste befangen. [...]
[...] Me habbað hringa gespong,
sliðhearda sal, siðes amyrrred,
afyrrred me min feðe. fet synt gebundene,
handa gehæfte. Synt þissa heldora
wegas forworhte swa ic mid wihte ne mæg
of þissum liðobendum. Licgað me ymbe
hardes irenes hate geslægene
grindlas greate mid þy me god hafað
gehæfted be þam healse [...] (ll. 371-374a and 377b-385a).⁹⁵

Satan thus conveys the idea of immobility and imprisonment insisting on ties. Similarly, part of Beelzebub's speech is once again centred on the description of Hell as a prison ("the King of Heav'n hath doom'd/ this place our dungeon", ll. 316/317), and, like the Old English Satan, he insists on bondage as well, with references to paralysis and confinement. Indeed he describes the fallen angels as

Banded against his Throne, but to remaine
In strictest bondage, though thus far remov'd,
Under th' inevitable curb, reserv'd
His captive multitude [...] (ll. 320-323).

He reaffirms the idea at ll. 332-335, in which he even compares the devil's condition to slavery:

[...] for what peace will be giv'n
To us enslav'd, but custody severe,
And stripes, and arbitrary punishment
Inflicted? [...].

Another similarity between the two poems is the building of a structure in Hell: in *Paradise Lost* the devils build *Pandemonium*, the great palace of all devils (Book I, ll. 679-751), which has a "spacious hall [...] where champions bold / wont ride in armed" (ll. 762-764). Interestingly, the description of the palace and of its great hall where warriors are summoned reminds us of the Germanic *sele*. Similarly, in *Genesis B* Satan wants to build a solid "structure" ("getimbro", l. 276). In *Paradise Lost* Lucifer's palace is described as being "at length into the limits of the north"; it is placed "high on a hill" and "on a mount" (Book V, ll. 755-758). Similarly, in *Genesis B* his palace is in the north and west (ll. 274b-276a), cardinal points that, from a symbolic point of view, traditionally have a strongly negative connotation. The similarity of description could be regarded as more than a coincidence but once again raises the issue of both poets' possible use of shared sources and *topoi*. In this regard, Kennedy considers that it could be explained by a common

95 "But iron bands lie around me / ropes of chain swing on me. I am kingdomless. / I have so hard infernal bands / that bind me fast [...] / I have bands of rings / ferocious ties restrict my movement / my steps are encumbered. My feet are fettered / the hands immobilized. These hell doors are / made to bar the way so that I cannot do anything / from these ties. I lie with / big bolts of hard iron/ hammered hot by means of which God has / enchained me and my neck".

tradition which inspired both the Old English poet and Milton⁹⁶.

Concerning the devil's revenge, the two poems once again show both similarities and differences. In *Paradise Lost*, at the end of the council of the fallen angels, they decide that they will take the offensive by sending one of them to spy and corrupt Adam. As in *Genesis B*, Satan asks his comrades who will undertake the mission but in this case he himself eventually elects to take on the mission and sets off on his flight, while the others remain in Hell. In the Old English poem, instead, Satan cannot move and asks for a volunteer to undertake the mission on his behalf.

In both poems the tempter is described as he escapes from his dungeon. It is interesting to notice that both poets mention the tempter's wings in relation to the strength he needs to perform his flight. In *Genesis B* at ll. 415-417 Satan asks for a volunteer “þæt he up heonon ute mihte / cuman þurh þas clustro and hæfde cræft mid him / þæt he mid feðerhoman fleogan meahte”⁹⁷. In *Paradise Lost* he should

[...] spread his aerie flight
Upborn with indefatigable wings
Over the vast abrupt, ere he arrive
The happy Ile; what strength, what art can then
Suffice, or what evasion bear him safe
Through the strict Senteries and Stations thick
Of Angels watching round? (Book II, ll. 407-413).

Milton's reference to energy is double, as the tempter's wing should be “indefatigable” and he should possess “strength” and “art” in order to fly so far without being detected by God's angels. As already noted, Bolton asserts that Milton's use of “strength” and “art” at l. 410 may derive from Junius's Anglo-Saxon dictionary, as it could be a translation of the Old English “cræft”⁹⁸. The scholar's theory appears credible, but he refers to l. 1647 of *Genesis A*. Nevertheless, it seems more plausible that such a translation could refer to the term “cræft” that occurs at l. 416 of *Genesis B*. Indeed, it is extremely interesting to notice how the translation of a term referring to the strength of the tempter's wings in the Old English poem occurs precisely in the corresponding passage of *Paradise Lost*, in which Milton describes the devil's flight. Furthermore, he describes Satan's escape from the Gates of Hell using a phrase that reminds us of the Old English tempter. As the latter “comes through these gates” (l. 416), Satan “puts on swift wings, and towards the Gates of Hell / explores his solitary flight” (Book II, ll. 631-632). In addition, the use of the verb “put on”, as if wings were a removable part of his military equipment, reminds us once again of the Anglo-Saxon tempter, who wears military dress with his “helm of deception on his head”, which he fastens with buckles⁹⁹, and starts his flight escaping from the dungeon of Hell while Satan remains there awaiting the outcome of the enterprise.

96 “The location of Satan's kingdom in the north of heaven in both poems, for example, merely proves the knowledge of a widely current tradition by both poets. According to some systems of demonology the four quarters of the world, before the rebellion, were assigned to four angels, the north being assigned to Lucifer in allusion to the words of Isaiah xiv. 12, 13: 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north'. By Talmudic tradition, however, the sphere of all demons became localized in the north, while the east was assigned to God, the south to the angels, and the west to man. The emergence of these same traditions in Teutonic mythology makes it natural that they should be reflected in Anglo-Saxon poetry”. C.W. Kennedy, *The Cædmon Poems, Translated into English Prose by Charles W. Kennedy, with an introduction and facsimiles of the illustrations in the Junius MS*, Routledge/E.P. Dutton, London and New York 1916, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

97 “That he from here might / come through these gates and have the strength with him / so that he with his wings might fly”.

98 W.F. Bolton, *A further echo of the Old English 'Genesis' in Milton's 'Paradise Lost'*, pp. 58-61. See paragraph 2.

99 Ll.444-445: “hæleðhelm on heafod asette and þone full hearde geband, / spenn mid spangum” (“he put the helm of deception on his head and fastened it very tightly / fixed it with buckles”).

All these similarities are undoubtedly striking and interesting and they lead us to think that Milton was definitely influenced by *Genesis B* in writing *Paradise Lost*, although it is not sure whether his knowledge of the text was direct or mediated.

5. The temptation of Adam and Eve

This analysis of the characterisation of Satan will conclude with some observations about the voyage of the tempter and the means through which he seduces mankind.

It is interesting to note that while the Old English poet's description of the tempter's flight is schematic and takes but a few lines, Milton lingers on the description of what Satan sees during his flight, allowing the reader to see things, by degrees, as though through his eyes. This description is consequently permeated by the paradigm of light and then by that of sight, as Satan sees light for the first time after his fall, and includes geographical and cartographical details, as was common in the poetry of Milton's time. In this sense, Satan's flight is an explorative voyage and he is represented as a sort of explorer (Book III, ll. 416-430).

In the Old English poem Satan's deputy first tempts Adam and, after he fails, he tempts Eve by trying to convince her that he is a messenger of God, who has sent him to tell them that they should eat the previously forbidden fruit. He succeeds by preying on Eve's sense of duty towards the Lord and on her love for Adam. Milton's Satan, however, tempts Eve firstly because he believes that she has a weaker nature. He preys on her ambition by trying to convince her that in eating the fruit she will become divine and will then be similar to God and superior to Adam. However, both poets succeed in conveying the idea of a malicious and cunning enemy.

The manners of the temptation of Eve are similar in the two poems. In *Paradise Lost*, before approaching her directly, Satan causes a strange dream in Eve (Book V, ll. 78-93) by means of which he hopes to stimulate her desire for knowledge and thus to convince her to eat the forbidden fruit. She dreams of an angel who, standing next to the Tree of Knowledge, wonders why its fruits are forbidden to mankind and he himself eats a fruit to taste it (Book V, ll. 31-94). After the angel in her dream promises her knowledge, she eats the fruit and then flies with him onto the clouds where she can see the immensity of the earth; when her guide disappears, she falls down and falls asleep:

So saying, he drew nigh, and to me held,
Even to my mouth of that same fruit held part
Which he had pluckt; the pleasant savourie smell
So quick'nd appetite, that I, methought,
Could not but taste. Forthwith up to the clouds
With him I flew, and underneath beheld
The earth outstretcht immense, a prospect wide
And various: wondring at my flight and change
To this high exaltation [...] (ll. 82-90)

Similarly, in *Genesis B*, after eating the fruit, Eve is given a vision by the false angel (ll. 509-609a) who wants to demonstrate that eating the fruit was the right thing to do, and that she now has to convince Adam to do the same. In this vision Eve can see far across the heavenly kingdom, the heavens and Earth appear to her more radiant, and the universe seems fairer:

Heo þa þæs ofætēs æt, alwaldan bræc
word and willan. Þa meahte heo wide geseon
þurh þæs laðan læn þe hie mid ligenum beswac,
dearnenga bedrog, þe hire for his dædum com,
þæt hire þuhte hwitre heofon and eorðe,

and eall þeos woruld wlitigre, and geweorc godes
micel and mihtig, þeah heo hit þurh monnes geþeah
ne sceawode; ac se sceaða georne
swicode ymb þa sawle þe hire ær þa siene onlah,
þæt heo swa wide wlitan meahte
ofer heofonrice. [...] (ll. 599-609a)¹⁰⁰.

As the quoted passages show, both poets insist on the fact that eating the fruit has widened Eve's perspective: as Milton's Eve in her dream could see "the earth outstretcht immense, a prospect wide" (l. 88), the Old English first mother can see widely (ll. 600 and 608) and to her the Creation appears "great" (l. 605).

The poem insists on the idea that what Eve sees in this vision is different and brighter. Indeed, as he talks to her, the tempter confirms that

þu meaht nu þe self geseon swa ic hit þe secgan ne þearf,
Eue seo gode, þæt þe is ungelic
wlite and wæstmas, siððan þu minum wordum getruwodest,
læstes mine lare. Nu scineð þe leoht fore
glædlic ongear þæt ic from gode brohte
hwit of heofonum; [...] (ll. 611-616a)¹⁰¹.

Similarly, Milton also mentions brightness, but not in relation to Eve's vision of the world: in her dream the Tree of Knowledge looks more luminous, as ll. 50-56 demonstrate:

And on, methought, alone I pass'd through ways
That brought me on a sudden to the tree
Of interdicted knowledge: fair it seem'd,
Much fairer to my fancie then by day:
And as I wondring lookt, beside it stood
One shap'd and wing'd like one of those from Heav'n
By us oft seen; [...].

In this respect, the similarity between the two poems is, once again, extremely interesting, so much so as to suggest that, despite many differences, Milton may have either employed the same sources of the Old English poet, or been familiar with *Genesis B*.

6. Conclusion

In light of the analysis of the two poems, it is clear that there are significant similarities and differences regarding the characterization of Satan. Both poets describe the devil as a proud leader and as an exile, who, envious of the first parents, whom he perceives as usurpers, decides to take his revenge against God and to seduce them.

The purpose of the poet of *Genesis B*, as well as that of the other texts handed down in the *Junius II* manuscript, was to convey a moral teaching, as he seeks to warn readers to beware of false

100"She then ate the fruit, broke the Almighty's / word and will. Then she might see afar / through the gifts of the fiend, who with his lies deceived her/ secretly seduced, who came to her for his deeds / so that it seemed to her that the heavens and the earth were brighter / and all this world more beautiful and God's work / great and mighty, though she did not through human thought / see it, but the fiend eagerly / deceived the soul; he who before had given her that vision / so that she could see so far / over the heavenly kingdom".

101"You might now yourself see as I have not the need to tell you / Eve the good, that to you [the world] is different / in beauty and forms, since you trusted my words / [since you] listened to my instructions. Now shines the light in front of you / radiant forward / that I brought from God / brightness from Heaven".

prophets, to shun the deceptive nature of Satan, and to invite them to avoid the temptations of sin. Therefore, his description of Hell is rather schematic and essential; Satan is an unequivocally bad creature, who does not hesitate in his quest for revenge and his feelings are on the whole almost never contradictory. He does not repent, nor does he ever think that he could have made a mistake by rebelling against God; on the contrary, he believes that he has been wronged. He is described in a very dramatic way: the poet emphasizes his suffering due to his rebellion, his physical transformation and the eternal immobility he has to endure. However, he focuses mainly on Satan's deceptive nature and cunning, highlighting his complaints due to the sorrow and to the sense of deprivation that he experiences in Hell as an exile in order to convey a warning to the reader against the dangers and the consequences of sin.

In contrast, *Paradise Lost* is much more theatrical, as Milton focuses on Satan's dramatic aspects and on the feelings he experiences as an exile and tempter of mankind. His characterization is more "intimate" in baring his complex thoughts. Milton's Satan is more human in his contradictions and hesitations. His ambivalent feelings and inner conflicts are so intense and violent that cannot be hidden, for they are betrayed by his facial expressions. His descriptions of the devil are so dramatic, so emphatic and so passionate that the reader cannot help but be moved by such sensitivity. He almost redeems Satan, showing him in a different light: while traditionally and in *Genesis B* the devil is the pure essence of evil perpetrated deliberately and without any repentance, in Milton's poem he is humanized, in that he shows the psychological and emotional dynamics that determine his actions, inducing the reader to empathize and feel compassion and pity for the atrocious eternal punishment which he has to endure. Milton shows that Satan is sensitive, as he experiences remorse for his actions and almost love for the first parents. He wants to corrupt humanity not just for the sake of evil in itself, but also because he feels a desire for revenge on the Lord and envy for Adam and Eve, who have usurped his former place and have become God's favourite creatures.

Regarding the influence of *Genesis B* on *Paradise Lost*, as this work has pointed out, there are many striking similarities between the two poems, some of which seem more than coincidences. Moreover, some of the illustrations in the *Junius II* manuscript, particularly in the case of the drawings of the fallen angels, have close parallels with the verbal descriptions in passages of Milton.

In particular, this analysis has confirmed that the two poets have used shared sources in the composition of their texts. Furthermore, it has led to a reconsideration of *Paradise Lost*, which, in the same way as *Genesis B*, has proven to be a rewriting of the account of the fall of the rebel angels and of Man, in which the same apocryphal material of the Old English poem has been reused, giving birth to a complex text of undoubted literary richness.

Finally, the analysis has revealed that Milton undoubtedly was familiar with the Old English poem and that he employed some of its imagery in *Paradise Lost*. It has shown that in some cases both poets have used analogous phrases in similar narrative contexts, as for example the cross-references between the two versions of Satan's soliloquy and of the temptation demonstrate.

However, it is not possible to determine whether Milton's knowledge of *Genesis B* was direct or mediated by someone else – realistically Junius himself – who could have told him about the content of the manuscript. Therefore, it seems that this puzzle is destined to remain unsolved unless new evidence comes to light. In the meantime, we, as readers, can only appreciate the richness of these two masterpieces and be fascinated by their being different and similar at the same time.