

**Man in Devil's Guise:
Satan's Exceptional Humanity in Milton's
*Paradise Lost.***

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Henry Peter Coleman

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I begin by observing how major critics and poets from Dryden on have understood this wonderful yet controversial character in Milton's greatest poem. After identifying the Satanist and anti-Satanist schools in this tradition and some of the general features of each school, I proceed to argue my central claim: by virtue of his consciousness, will, reason, and passion, Satan is a character whose nature is not in fact supernatural but fundamentally and essentially the same as that of an exceptional human being. I justify this claim by treating each of these attributes in separate chapters (the first chapter documents both consciousness and will). In making this argument, I take issue with early anti-Satanists, such as Dryden, Addison, Blair, and Johnson, and later anti-Satanists, such as Williams, Lewis, Musgrove, and Fish who fail to recognise Satan's exceptional human qualities, especially his reason. Though I align myself with some of the Satanists I discuss in the opening chapter, I also distinguish myself from them by first providing a distinct description of the specific nature of Satan's consciousness, will, reason, and passion. In so doing, I advance the Satanist critics' understanding of Satan by demonstrating that when all these particular features of Satan's character are taken together he can be seen as an exceptional human being. Thus, I explicitly argue for a claim that Satanists either gloss over or simply assume: Satan is essentially human. And it is because he is essentially human that Johnson is mistaken in claiming that the poem lacks human interest: we are interested in Satan because Satan is like us.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Summary and Assessment of the Critical Tradition

Milton's Satan evoked as wide and varying a critical response in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as he does today. Over this three hundred-year tradition of criticism, many commentators and critics have been either very impressed or unimpressed by Satan, while others have identified both admirable and not so admirable features in his character. It will be the intention in this first chapter to survey this dense landscape of criticism on Satan, charting not only the views of the most prominent and influential writers on Satan, but also some of the trends which arise from their arguments. The tradition of criticism will be considered with the intention of gaining a broad yet sufficiently detailed understanding of what it is about Satan's character that impresses or fails to impress these critics. It will be in close relation to this critical history that I will then situate and assert my argument throughout the following chapters of this thesis.

In the late seventeenth century, one of Milton's earliest critics, John Dryden, maintained that Milton might have been one of the greatest heroic poets if in *Paradise Lost* "the Devil had not been his hero, instead of Adam; if the giant had not foiled the knight, and driven him out of the stronghold, to wander through the world with his lady errant."¹ In spite of this, Dryden is not impressed by Satan, for as C. S. Lewis notes over two hundred years later, "when Dryden said that Satan was Milton's 'hero' he meant

¹ John Dryden, *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900) p. 165.

something quite different.”² In describing Satan as the “hero,” Dryden is merely referring to him as one of the principal players in an epic poem as prescribed by Homer and Aristotle, and not as a figure who ought to elicit tremendous admiration or sympathy from the reader. Dryden also understood Satan to be a supernatural agent, fundamentally different in nature from the human characters in the poem. Referring to Milton’s treatment of character in the poem, Dryden remarks, “his heavenly machines are many, and his human persons are but two.”³ On the other hand, John Dennis, an early eighteenth-century critic, is thoroughly impressed by Satan, particularly because of the abundant emotions manifested by him and his rebel crew: “The Passions of *Milton’s* Devils have enough of Humanity in them to make them delightful, but then they have a great deal more to make them admirable and may be said to be the true Passions of Devils.”⁴ Thus, while Dryden, who ambivalently terms Satan a hero, sees him as a supernatural entity, Dennis is clearly impressed by Satan’s passion which makes him human.

Dryden’s identification of Satan as the poem’s hero brought him into disagreement with Joseph Addison who, in his *Spectator* papers of the early 1700s, considers that Christ is the hero of the poem, and that much about Satan is ridiculous:

Amidst those Impieties which this Enraged Spirit utters in other places of the Poem, the Author has taken care to introduce none that is not big with absurdity, and incapable of shocking a Religious Reader; his Words, as the Poet describes them, bearing only a *Semblance of Worth, not Substance*.⁵

² C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942) p. 24.

³ Dryden, p. 29.

⁴ John Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, ed. J. V. Price (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1994) p. 116.

⁵ Addison, *The Spectator*, ed. D. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) p. 86, no. 303.

This attitude was reiterated by Dr. Johnson some seventy years later:

There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.⁶

Addison and Johnson also believed that one of the weaknesses of *Paradise Lost* was its lack of human subject matter, the former noting in one of his early papers in the *Spectator* that the majority of the characters in the poem are supernatural: "*Milton's Characters, most of them, lie out of Nature, and were to be formed purely by his own Invention.*"⁷ The point is more sharply made by Johnson: "The want of human interest is always felt."⁸ Thus, Addison and Johnson not only claimed that Satan was absurd, but also that the poem lacked human interest, in part because Satan and most of the other characters were not human.

The neo-classical views of Addison and Johnson, however, were challenged by writers on the sublime who increasingly admired the figure of Satan. For example, in 1757 Burke is drawn to Satan's magnificent appearance: "Here is a very noble picture; and in what does this poetical picture consist? In images of a tower, an archangel, the sun rising through mists, or in an eclipse, the ruin of monarchs, and the revolutions of kingdoms."⁹ Satan's physical appearance also appeals to Blair nearly thirty years later:

Almost the whole of the First and Second Books of *Paradise Lost* are continued instances of the sublime. The prospect of Hell, and of the fallen Host, the appearance and behaviour of Satan, the consultation of

⁶ Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. A. Napier, vol. 1 (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890) p. 176.

⁷ Addison, p. 586.

⁸ Johnson, p. 185.

⁹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. and intro. J. T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958) p. 62.

the infernal Chiefs and Satan's flight through Chaos to the borders of this world, discover the most lofty ideas that ever entered into the conception of any Poet.¹⁰

Blair also comments on Satan's virtue and passion: "He is brave and faithful to his troops. In the midst of his impiety, he is not without remorse. He is even touched with pity for our first parents . . . He is actuated by ambition and resentment, rather than by pure malice."¹¹ Thus, in the eighteenth century, Satan was dismissed as absurd by Addison and Johnson, while Dennis and the later writers on the sublime admired him for his virtue and appearance, and felt an "element of sentiment . . . towards the rebellious angel."¹² As Barker notes, the way was "prepared for Shelley and the other dynamic Satanists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."¹³

Admiration for Satan reached its height in the first half of the nineteenth century. The reverence the Romantic poets and critics had for Satan is expressed by Blake's unconventional philosophy in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Here he states that human desire is the energy of activity and growth, while reason curbs this creativity. Believing a poet to be naturally inclined toward desire and activity, Blake accounts for Milton's magnificent representation of Satan and the devils: "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it."¹⁴ It is Satan's courage and fortitude which impress William Hazlitt, another prominent Romantic literary figure:

¹⁰ Hume Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. T. Dale (London: William Tegg and Co., 1853) p. 543.

¹¹ Blair, p. 543

¹² Arthur E. Barker, "' . . . And On His Crest Sat Horror': Eighteenth-Century Interpretations of Milton's Sublimity and his Satan," *The University of Toronto Quarterly* 11 (1942): p. 436.

¹³ Barker, p. 436.

¹⁴ William Blake, *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. D. Erdman with commentary by Harold Bloom (New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1968) p. 35.

His ambition was the greatest, and his punishment was the greatest; but not so his despair, for his fortitude was as great as his sufferings. His strength of mind was matchless as his strength of body; the vastness of his designs did not surpass the firm, inflexible determination with which he submitted to his irreversible doom, and final loss of all good. His power of action and of suffering was equal. He was the greatest power that was ever overthrown.¹⁵

Hazlitt also admires Satan's intense passion: "In a word, the interest of the poem arises from the daring ambition and fierce passions of Satan."¹⁶ For Hazlitt, all these extraordinary qualities mark in Satan a "decided superiority of character."¹⁷ The same "superiority" underpins Shelley's admiration of Satan. In his *Defence of Poetry*, he postulates that Satan, by virtue of his character, is morally superior to God:

Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in "Paradise Lost." It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and, although venial in a slave, are not to be forgiven in a tyrant; although redeemed by much that ennobles his defeat in one subdued, are marked by all that dishonours his conquest in the victor. Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton has so far violated the popular creed . . . as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his god over his devil.¹⁸

¹⁵ William Hazlitt, "On Shakespeare and Milton," *Lectures on the English Poets* (London: Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1960) p. 65.

¹⁶ Hazlitt, p. 63.

¹⁷ Hazlitt, p. 65.

¹⁸ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1937) pp. 46-7.

Shelley is impressed not just by Satan's raging passion, but also by the way he perseveres in the face of great adversity towards an objective, and he sees in this behaviour greater moral worth than he sees in God, "who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge." The readiness with which the Romantics sought the good in Satan's character is described in 1919 by James Hanford: "The official morality of *Paradise Lost* is discountenanced; Milton's insistent condemnation of Satan as the inversion of all good is ignored."¹⁹ The Romantic adoration of Satan's supreme virtue is vividly reaffirmed by the Victorian Thomas Macaulay in his *Essay on Milton*:

The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake, and marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, nor even from hope itself.²⁰

In general, then, Romantic critics were greatly impressed by what they perceived as Satan's courage, fortitude, and perseverance, and the way in which these qualities made him morally superior to God.

At the turn of the century, the critic Sir Walter Raleigh remarked provocatively that "[Satan's] very situation as the fearless antagonist of Omnipotence makes him either a fool or a hero, and Milton is far indeed from permitting us to think him a fool."²¹ Responding first to the views of Addison and Johnson who saw Satan as absurd and, secondly, to the opposing view of the Romantics, Raleigh identifies in their arguments two essential perceptions: Satan is seen as either a fool or a hero. While Raleigh shared

¹⁹ James Hanford, "Milton and the Return to Humanism," *Studies in Philology* 16 (1919): p. 137.

²⁰ Thomas Macaulay, *Essay on Milton*, ed. J. Downie (London: Blackie and Son Ltd., 1899) p. 28.

the opinion of the Romantic critics, the succinct polarity with which he encapsulates the essential and fundamental attitudes of these two opposite schools of critics significantly influenced subsequent analysis of Satan. Most importantly, Raleigh's thesis propagated the notion that the *only* critical reaction to Satan was to see him as either a fool or a hero. Nowhere is this more vividly realised than in G. Rostrevor Hamilton's study of Satan, which is not only entitled *Hero or Fool?: A Study of Milton's Satan*²² but which valiantly defends Satan's heroism. William Empson, also directly addresses Raleigh's thesis, asserting ardently throughout *Milton's God* that Satan is not a fool since he did not "set out to attack omnipotence."²³ And again, some forty years later in Harold Bloom's introduction to his edited volume *John Milton*, the hero or fool conundrum reappears as strongly as ever: "the reader is compelled to enter upon the most famous and vexing of critical problems concerning *Paradise Lost*, the Satanic controversy itself. Is Satan in some sense heroic, or is he merely a fool?"²⁴ Thus, Raleigh's identification in 1915 of the dichotomy between Satan's folly and heroism, a dichotomy which was established in much eighteenth and nineteenth-century Milton criticism, initiated for many modern critics of the poem a trend to attend to Satan's character strictly within these narrow terms.

It is Satan's manifest folly, accordingly to twentieth-century critics such as Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis, which strongly refutes the positive view of Satan held by the Romantic poets and critics. Closely following the line of argument taken by Addison and Johnson, Williams and Lewis see Satan's attempt to defy an almighty God

²¹ Walter Raleigh, *Milton* (London: Edward Arnold, 1915) p. 133.

²² G. Rostrevor Hamilton, *Hero or Fool?: A Study of Milton's Satan* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1944).

²³ William Empson, *Milton's God* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961) p. 37.

as fundamentally irrational. Williams emphasises the enormous absurdity of such an exercise:

[Satan] goes on to say of the Omnipotence that he and his followers “shook his throne”: it is only afterwards that we discover that this is entirely untrue. Milton knew as well as we do that Omnipotence cannot be shaken; therefore the drama lies not in that foolish effort but in the terror of the obstinacy that provoked it, and in the result; not in the fight but in the fall. The irrepressible laughter of heaven at the solemn antics of “injured merit,” of the “self-impair’d,” breaks out.²⁵

Williams also asserts that because Satan is so enormously proud, Satan is also malicious and idiotic: “Milton may sometimes have liked to think of himself as proud, but it is extraordinarily unlikely that he liked to think of himself as malicious and idiotic. Yet it is those two qualities he attributes to Satan as a result of his energy of self-love.”²⁶ Similarly, Lewis argues that the war in Heaven reveals a gross lack of reason in Satan’s character: “As a consequence the same rebellion which means misery for the feelings and corruption for the will, means Nonsense for the intellect.”²⁷ In comparing Satan to Meredith’s Sir Willoughby, Lewis argues that Satan is in reality a ridiculous character to whom we properly respond with laughter: “At that precise point where Satan or Sir Willoughby meets something real, laughter *must* arise, just as steam must when water meets fire”(p. 95). Lewis is also unimpressed by Satan because he sees him as the Devil of Christianity who must be morally condemned: “Christianity commits every Christian to believing that ‘the Devil is (in the long run) an ass’”(p. 95). Also present in Lewis’ argument is the implication that Satan in some ways resembles an immoral and

²⁴ Harold Bloom, introduction, *John Milton*, ed. H. Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986) p. 3.

²⁵ Charles Williams, introduction, *The English Poems of John Milton in Milton Criticism: Selections from Four Centuries*, ed. J. E. Thorpe (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951) p. 258.

despicable human being, “not even a political spy, but a mere peeping Tom”(p. 99). However, in likening Satan to this kind of human being, Lewis identifies only reason, will, and a few violent passions, and thus fails to take into consideration Satan’s consciousness, memory, thought, and the full array of passion he displays. All of these, we will see, are fundamental attributes of the human character, without which any resemblance between Satan and human beings is incomplete and inaccurate. In viewing Satan as an irrational being and as a figure undeserving of any admiration on account of his role as the enemy of God, Williams and Lewis essentially, though far more fiercely, reaffirm the position of Addison and Johnson.

Williams and Lewis, then, are vehemently opposed to the position taken by the Romantic poets. Thus, a second trend which can be observed in the critical tradition on Satan is an intensifying polarity of opinion towards him. While the beginnings of this division may be found in the eighteenth century, it is the extreme views of Blake and Shelley that inaugurate a more fierce opposition. Shelley, for example, argues adamantly that Satan is morally superior to God, and never deviates from this firm view to accommodate or even acknowledge any contrary opinion. This is also a feature of Williams’ and Lewis’ arguments. Unlike these critics, however, Addison and Johnson, while seeing Satan as absurd and irrational for rebelling against God, also recognise certain redeeming features in his character. For example, Addison notes that “His Sentiments are every way answerable to his Character, and suitable to a created Being of the most exalted and most depraved Nature.”²⁶ It is in part due to the extreme and vehement nature of their views that the Romantics and other later critics have become

²⁶ Williams, p. 259.

²⁷ Lewis, p. 97.

known as “Satanists,” while on the other hand, those strongly opposed to Satan, such as Williams, Lewis, Sydney Musgrove, and Stanley Fish, are known as “anti-Satanists.”

This same vehemence is very much a feature of Elmer Stoll’s²⁹ ardently Satanist argument, which directly opposes Williams and Lewis. Drawing on the Romantics, Shelley in particular, Stoll champions Satan because he believes that his virtue and passion make him *Paradise Lost*’s most “magnificent figure”(p. 108). From the outset of his case, Stoll argues that Satan is a character of sound reason, thus rejecting the anti-Satanist view that he is absurd. He addresses straight away the event which is most often cited as grounds for deeming Satan a fool: the war in Heaven. He argues that to rebel against an omnipotent God is not a senseless act, but rather a natural reaction given the circumstances. Satan, Stoll believes, has a genuine motive for pursuing this course of action: “The motive — the grievance in Messiah’s appointment to the headship, for which Milton had no authority — has (again) to be permitted him for his story. The archangel’s ‘injur’d merit’ is no more improbable or unacceptable than sinless Eve’s resentment against the ‘envious’ prohibition”(p. 111). Given, then, this “slight provocation”(p. 113) it is perfectly reasonable that Satan, out of wounded pride, should be moved to retaliate against God. Having argued that Satan is a figure possessing sound reason, Stoll’s argument shifts to focus on Satan’s emotions. It is these, he believes, that also make Satan such an impressive character. In Stoll’s view, any inconsistencies that can be seen in his emotions do not detract from his magnificence; the universe depicted in the poem bears no resemblance to the one we know because Milton’s is a “supersensible world”(p. 113). It is wrong then to analyse what occurs in it in “the light of common

²⁸ Addison, p. 86, no. 303.

sense,”(p. 113) that is, with the same rigorous logic one would apply to earthly things. Instead, inconsistencies which are frequently used by anti-Satanists to reveal absurdity in Satan are accounted for by Stoll as a deliberate means of heightening the conflict within Satan’s character. Lewis, Stoll points out, completely misunderstands this intention: “The passionate paradoxes of Milton’s Titanic presentation he turns into a ‘personified self-contradiction’”(p. 113). Without these contraries, these “self-contradictions” in Satan’s character, Stoll contends, “the story itself would be inconceivable — at any rate unacceptable”(p. 114). A distance and freedom should be granted to the poetry so that the “trepidations and sufferings”(p. 114) of Satan which constitute his impressiveness are not stifled and undermined by inappropriate logical analysis. Stoll thus grounds his admiration of Satan in his understanding of Satan’s rebellion as a reasonable undertaking and in his view of the varied and turbulent passion within him.

G. Rostrevor Hamilton³⁰ also greatly admires Satan as a heroic figure in whom he sees conflict, virtue, and passion. First, Hamilton claims that Milton’s greatness lies in his imagination which has produced the magnificent figure of Satan. We should, then, judge Satan from the evidence in the text and put aside all moral preconceptions we could apply to the poem, for they will only misrepresent Satan. This attitude sharply distinguishes Hamilton from Lewis who reads the poem rigorously in terms of Christian morality. According to Hamilton, “Milton the poet is inexpressibly greater and more comprehensive than Milton the moralist, and it is only the imagination that makes Satan triumphantly alive”(p. 11). Hamilton describes Satan this way because, unlike the good

²⁹ Elmer E. Stoll, “Give the Devil his Due: A Reply to Mr. Lewis,” *Review of English Studies* 20 (1944): pp. 108-124.

³⁰ G. Rostrevor Hamilton, *Hero or Fool?: A Study of Milton’s Satan* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1944).

angels, he is fallen; thus, while “still the enemy, we seek in him some credible mixture of good with evil”(p. 8). Similar to our own lives, Satan’s is besieged by the forces of good and evil: “In Satan only is there full knowledge of the terrible conflict on which the human pair enter as novices — that division and union of good and evil which is the very atmosphere of human experience and history”(p. 39). Hamilton is also impressed by Satan’s virtue. In Satan’s first speech to the rebels in Hell, Hamilton identifies gallant strength and heroism: “there is more than malice here, more than bombast; there is greatness, indeed sublimity, in courage, endurance and determination”(p. 9). Combined with these qualities, and with his painful passions — “his spirit of revenge and his readiness for guile”(p. 9) — are several softer passions: “Satan’s heroic qualities are enhanced by this strain of something approaching tenderness in his character. We see it again when he is moved towards pity, and even love . . . His courage and will-power are not the expression of a nature irrevocably hardened or incapable of gentle emotion”(p. 25). His deep admiration of Satan is, finally, best expressed in his own words: “But behind the tragic darkness of Satan, powerful and boasting in his own power, we catch the vision, not quite eclipsed, of an ardent Lucifer in a Heaven more truly harmonious, giving glory to Love and a world of light”(p. 41). Thus, Hamilton is impressed by Satan essentially because of the inner conflict between good and evil he suffers, and the virtue and passion he displays.

This, however, is not Sydney Musgrove’s³¹ view, who is unimpressed by Satan on the grounds that he is a false and ignominious character whose moments of oft-celebrated magnificence in Books I and II are hollow. In arguing this position, Musgrove sees Satan’s nature as “either superhuman or abhuman”(p. 302). According to Musgrove,

Satan is plainly the image of evil, the Devil, and we are therefore expected to apply to him the normal moral preconceptions associated with such a figure: “the reader must hate, or be prepared to hate, Satan before the poem starts, because he already knows that he is evil and proud”(p. 303). Because Musgrove’s presumptions about Satan differ greatly from those of the Satanists, so, too, does his attitude towards the initial grandeur of Satan in Books I and II. Musgrove accounts for Satan’s magnificence here by observing that the early books are set in Hell, and that it is only in Hell, against the background of evil, that Satan appears impressive: “Satan as a gigantic figure of imaginative grandeur . . . does not exist until he is in Hell; . . . Satan’s ‘greatness’ and ‘individuality’ depend upon the existence of Hell for their own existence”(p. 311). Satan seems magnificent only when in this most abhorrent place which, according to Musgrove, calls into question the integrity of his magnificence: “Evil *can* be magnificent — against a background of evil, for evil is essentially false; but, as we shall see, it ceases to be magnificent, except in flashes, when its native setting of smoke and flame is removed”(p. 304-5). Thus, he concludes that this display of grandeur and magnificence is only an appearance, a precariously erected front designed only to *resemble* real grandeur: “in Hell . . . evil is permitted to take on an illusory glory”(p. 314). Not only, in Musgrove’s view, is Satan’s initial glory and splendour a pretence, but throughout the poem he also degenerates morally: “the general outline of degenerating evil, of the dissipation of the fog of illusion under the light of reality, remains clear and beyond mistake”(p. 315). Thus, Musgrove grounds his dislike of Satan in his false, ignoble, immoral, but also inhuman character.

³¹ Sydney Musgrove, “Is the Devil an Ass?”, *Review of English Studies* 21 (1945): p. 302-315.

Like Musgrove, Balachandra Rajan³² condemns Satan on moral grounds, yet he differs from Musgrove in that he also admires Satan. First, Rajan argues that there are important moral factors involved in a text which deals with the theological subject of Satan and God. He urges the reader to exercise a constant awareness of the moral preconceptions surrounding such a figure, an awareness which will work to annul any pretence of virtue in Satan: "So the heroic qualities which Satan brings to his mission, the fortitude, the steadfast hate, the implacable resolution which is founded on despair are qualities not to be imitated or admired. They are defiled by the evil to which they are consecrated"(p. 95). The purpose of Satan in the poem, then, as expressed in the process of degeneration he undergoes throughout it, is to present a powerful condemnation of evil:

You see it as a sermon on the weakness of evil and you learn more clearly than you can from any philosophy that evil must die by the logic of its being. But it is also a sermon on the strength of evil; because you see Satan created as he is, huge in the magnificence with which the first books surround him, you are compelled to know him as the Prince of Darkness and to admit his dominion over the forces of history. When two facts so apparently opposed are reconciled in one figure a poetic synthesis has been effected . . . the result must make Satan symbolically alive within the universe which Milton's epic operates. (p. 106)

However, in this passage it can be seen that there are aspects of Satan's character that impress Rajan. The words "magnificence," "Prince of Darkness," and the elements which make "Satan symbolically alive," indicate that Rajan can find, as can the Satanists, enough evidence to view Satan as a dynamic figure in the poem. Yet in the same passage, Rajan also writes that evil is doomed to perish by "the logic of its being." By

³² Balachandra Rajan, *Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth-Century Reader* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1947).

this he means that it is illogical for Satan to wage war against God, God in fact being the centre of all power and life. This, of course, is the highly irrational act cited as proof of Satan's absurdity by the anti-Satanists. Rajan thus admits both these views in his argument, which means that he is by definition neither a Satanist nor an anti-Satanist. He differs greatly from these critics in that instead of being rigidly devoted to one single and fiercely argued view, he acknowledges the validity of each of these views, and incorporates them both to strengthen his case.

However, this balanced approach is not a feature of Arthur J. A. Waldock's³³ Satanist argument, in which he argues that Satan is a highly reasonable character who is adversely affected by the general moral preconceptions surrounding him. Like Stoll, Waldock sees Satan as a highly rational being; thus, his rebellion against God is not a mindless act, but one initiated from a strong and reasonable motive. At the news of the appointment of Messiah, Satan's pride is deeply wounded, and we should realise that "Satan's sense of having been passed over, of having suffered impairment through the appointment of the Son, certainly does not affect us (as Mr Lewis and Mr Williams think it should) as laughable"(p. 73). Instead, Waldock proceeds to argue that "the rebellion (in the eyes, of course, of the rebels) was a thoroughly rational undertaking, with a fair fighting chance of success"(p. 66). In Satan's speech, too, there is sound reason behind certain "latent absurdities"(p. 70) that critics identify in its content. Waldock argues that the end justifies the means, and thus, that the logical inconsistencies in Satan's first address to the rebels in Book II contribute to the overall appeal Satan is making to the passions of his listeners: "The whole aim of the speech, obviously, is to instil a mood, to

³³ Arthur J. A. Waldock, *Paradise Lost and its Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947).

cheer spirits . . . the specious logic betrays, of course, the desperateness of the situation”(p. 70). Waldock also identifies virtue in Satan’s character, and thus further challenges Lewis. Waldock argues that even though Satan has many bad qualities in his character, as Lewis points out, there are also good ones present. He illustrates this by showing that virtue, even in a morally reprehensible person, is still virtue: “we have to admit that courage in a gangster is still courage and therefore good”(p. 76). He thus observes that Lewis is “reluctant to admit that we can condemn Satan for some things and at the same time find him extremely admirable for others”(p. 76). Waldock asserts, then, that moral preconceptions about Satan can be detrimental to a fair assessment of his character since they prevent some critics from appreciating positive qualities. Thus, Waldock argues that Satan acts out of sound reason, and he rejects the negative moral assessment posited by critics such as Lewis.

Further insight into Satan’s character is provided by Helen Gardner³⁴ who is impressed by him because he resembles in some important ways Shakespeare’s tragic heroes. Gardner, first of all, adheres to the anti-Satanist view that Satan is highly irrational in staging the war in Heaven: “The late Mr. Charles Williams . . . and Mr. C. S. Lewis . . . destroyed, one hopes for ever, the notion that Satan had grounds for his rebellion”(p. 205). In taking this position, she rejects a point central to Shelley and the views of most other Satanists. However, like the Satanist critics, Gardner also admires Satan because she believes that he is constructed in the poem as a tragic character and not, as one would expect to find in a poem of epic form, as an epic one. Thus, she argues that Satan is similar to Shakespeare’s tragic heroes: “Satan is an egoist and Satan is a

³⁴ Helen Gardner, “‘Milton’s Satan’ and the Theme of Damnation in Elizabethan Tragedy,” *English Studies* N. S. 1 (1948): pp. 46-66.

comic character in exactly the same way as Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, and Lear are egoists and comic characters”(p. 209). What particularly impresses Gardner about Satan’s tragic character is the raging conflict of emotion he manifests in his numerous soliloquies: “In them he reveals to us ‘the hot Hell that always in him burns’”(p. 208). She admires not only this turbulent inner conflict, but also Satan’s general heroic and dynamic nature: “he is a figure of heroic magnitude and heroic energy, and he is developed by Milton with dramatic emphasis and dramatic intensity”(p. 208). Gardner’s argument thus contains both anti-Satanist and Satanist views, which means that, like Rajan, she does not fit into either of the main schools of thought. Yet her admiration of Satan’s character helps identify what the Satanist critics admire. While Gardner admires Satan’s “heroic energy,” she is also impressed principally by the conflict of passion manifested by his thought similar to that of many of Shakespeare’s tragic heroes.

The influential and provocative William Empson³⁵ admires Satan for being not only morally superior to God, but also highly reasonable. In the first part of his argument, Empson follows and expands the view of Satan asserted by Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry*. The questioning of God’s authority by the rebel angels at the council of war in Heaven, one of the scenes on which the critical attitude towards Satan hinges, is praised by Empson as healthy scepticism: “the sources and the extent of God’s rights and power are for them a matter still under debate . . . and they assume that to obey God merely out of cowardice, while his rule becomes increasingly harsh . . . would be gross dishonour”(p. 46). This is seen again in Book I, where God’s mistreatment of Satan and the rebels in Hell reveals another dimension of God’s tyranny: “God has allowed them to recover consciousness merely to give them further torture. What they do not realize is

that God's infinite malice cannot be outwitted"(p. 38). Furthermore, the idea to mount the rebellion is provoked by God because he "supplied false evidence to encourage the doubt"(p. 46) of his omnipotence, and Satan merely acts on the facts God provides. Closely associated with the belief that Satan is morally superior to God is the view that Satan is also a highly rational being. In doubting God's omnipotence, the rebel angels simply act upon the evidence set before them which, Empson argues, proves God's fallibility: "If they can fight against him for three days, that is enough to prove that he has not got absolute or metaphysical power"(p. 41). Empson thus sees Satan's travails against God as an "heroic effort"(p. 62) and praises his "courage to act"(p. 47) upon his conviction. Here Empson forcefully rejects the anti-Satanist claim that Satan is irrational for attempting to defeat God. On the contrary, he sees Satan in possession of sound reason, and displaying his powerful intellect in the debate with Abdiel in Book V: "He reacts with splendid intellectual energy, completely undercutting his opponent, by questioning what both sides had previously taken for granted"(p. 83). Empson also argues that it is dramatically appropriate to view Satan so as "to make the character consistent"(p. 64), and he thereby differs from Waldock who argues that beyond Book IV there is no continuity in Satan's character: "The 'character', in short, disintegrates into what is really a succession of unrelated moods."³⁶ Empson, while acknowledging that Satan's character does undergo gradual debasement, continues nonetheless to admire him because a consistent view "presents the change in Satan with such force"(p. 71). Satan impresses him as a character who develops dramatically throughout the poem. Empson, then, is the most vehement Satanist critic in the twentieth century: he admires Satan as an

³⁵ William Empson, *Milton's God* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961).

³⁶ Waldock, p. 87.

extremely reasonable and virtuous being more enthusiastically than do Stoll, Hamilton, and Waldock.

In total opposition to Empson's view of Satan's high moral standing is Stanley Fish³⁷ who restores supreme moral and rational authority to God. Fish views Satan from within the framework of Christian didacticism and is unimpressed by his character because it contravenes the "theocentric universe *Paradise Lost* presupposes"(p. 336). God is at the centre of the poem, and it is with God and the best part of man that Fish associates logic, while passions are farthest from God and reason: "[Milton] could rely on his readers to associate logic and the capacity for logical reasoning with the godly instinct in man, and the passions, to which rhetoric appeals, with his carnal instincts"(p. 7, note 1). Reason is linked with God and better man, while the art of rhetoric diverts us away from the purity of God and logic: "Rhetoric is the verbal equivalent of the fleshy lures that seek to enthrall us and divert our thoughts from Heaven . . . while logic comes from God and speaks to that part of us which retains his image"(p. 61). Fish then makes the point that "God's personal character is established through his language,"(p. 74) with the same also applying to Satan. Differing completely from God, however, Satan's language is "a loose style, irresponsibly digressive, moving away steadily from logical coherence (despite the *appearance* of logic) and calling attention finally to the virtuosity of the speaker"(p. 74-5). Thus, because Satan practises rhetoric, he is a morally inferior being. Fish is also unimpressed by Satan because he sees him as an extremely illogical character. Satan's words, "And courage never to submit or yield,"³⁸ reveal, according to Fish, that Satan is not gallant, but is rather deluding himself he can become the source of

³⁷ Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (London: MacMillan, 1967).

³⁸ *Paradise Lost*, ed. C. Ricks (London: Penguin Classics, 1989) Bk. I, 108.

all power: “[Satan’s] deception is self-deception and involves an attempt to deny (to himself) the reality of an authority greater than his”(p. 8, note 1). In rejecting the supremacy of God’s might, Satan is in fact destroying his “selfhood,” his own significance as a being, “Since all agents maintain their positions and their identities by virtue of their relation to God”(p. 337). Therefore, when Satan declares “myself am Hell”³⁹ he is making the most extreme break in union with God, and in effect negating his being, “since hell is the state of disunion from God’s sustaining power and hence a state of nonbeing”(p. 337). Thus, like the other anti-Satanists, Fish sees Satan as morally and intellectually inferior.

Kenneth Gross,⁴⁰ on the other hand, is impressed by Satan because unlike the other characters in the poem, he has a fascinating mind which reveals to the reader many dimensions of his character. In Gross’s view, Satan “at times, seems to be the only character *with* a voice, mind, or attitude of his own”(p. 337). First, since Satan possesses an active mind, he is able to lay before the reader in his soliloquies the personal process of thinking: “Satan is the only character in the poem who thinks, or in whom I best recognize what it feels like to think”(p. 337). By means of the operation of thought and inward reflection in his mind, Satan is aware of himself as a being: “Satan is Milton’s picture of what thinking looks like, an image of the mind, of subjectivity, of self-consciousness”(p. 337). Exposed by these inner reflections, according to Gross, is also the divided and confused state of Satan’s mind: “Satan is an image of the mind in its dividedness from both itself and others, in its illusions of inwardness and power”(p. 337). Satan’s speech, too, further reveals his active and vital mind: “It in fact may be the

³⁹ *Paradise Lost*, Bk. IV, 75.

compulsiveness, the unbending error of Satan's words which makes them feel like so proper an emblem of the mind's life, the work of the mind"(p. 338). In addition, the "evidence in his speeches of a mind crossed by longing and pain"(p. 338) displays strong passion within him. Thus, "The lure of Satan is the lure of the dramatized mind"(p. 337) and this is why Satan holds greater appeal for us than "the accurate theology of a reasonable God who must have no inside, no underside, no shifts in motivation (indeed, no motivation at all), must in a sense have no mind"(p. 338). God lacks the dramatic interest Satan holds since, according to Gross, God's spoken words appear "as Satan's never do, with so little dramatic framing to remind us of the historical and rhetorical conditions of utterance"(p. 338). Satan's dramatised mind makes him more attractive than God since he comes closest in the poem to being a complete fictional character — in short, "Satan's character . . . seems to be the only character"(p. 337). Thus Gross, while not by definition a Satanist, nevertheless adds to the picture painted by those critics who are impressed by Satan with his view that because of its thought, self-consciousness, and passion, Satan is unique in having a "dramatized mind."

Also impressed by Satan is John Carey⁴¹ who sees him as a richer and more complicated character than the others in the poem. Carey, though, explicitly dissociates himself from either the Satanist or anti-Satanist schools of critics: "The correct critical reaction to this dispute is not to imagine that it can be settled — that either Satanists or anti-Satanists can be shown to be 'right'. . . A more reasonable reaction is to recognize that the poem is insolubly ambivalent, insofar as the reading of Satan's 'character' is

⁴⁰ Kenneth Gross, "Satan and the Romantic Satan: A Notebook," *Re-Membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, eds. M. Nyquist and M. Ferguson (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1987).

⁴¹ John Carey, "Milton's Satan," *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. D. Danielson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

concerned”(p. 132). Nonetheless, certain aspects of Satan’s character do impress Carey, one of which is its “depth,”(p. 133) as he puts it. According to Carey, Satan’s character has layers and dimensions which the reader cannot fully know: “The illusion must be created that the character has levels hidden from us, the observers. By comparison with Satan, the other characters in *Paradise Lost* — Adam, Eve, even God — exist simply and transparently at the level of the words they speak. Satan does not — partly because his habitual mode is dissimulation”(p. 133). Satan’s ability to lie and feign, then, gives an element of uncertainty or mystery to his character because we are unable to be sure of “Satan’s ‘true’ state of mind”(p. 134). This distinguishes Satan from the poem’s other characters in whom “no such interesting possibility of discrepancy opens up between inner state and outward profession or appearance”(p. 134). Carey is also impressed by the violent conflict of passion within Satan which “reveal him as a creature of dynamic tensions, such as the other characters of the poem notably lack”(p. 134). In addition to passion, Satan’s unstable and changing consciousness enhances the fictional “depth” of his character: “The fallen Satan is, we gather, a creature of moods, apprehending reality through mists of self-deception and forgetfulness. This wavering, slumbering, deceptive state of consciousness is another factor that gives Satan fictional depth, concealing him from our full knowledge”(p.137). Carey also acknowledges the imaginative powers which Satan possesses: “he displays imagination in ways unavailable to God or the other good characters”(p. 141). During the temptation scene, for example, Satan’s active imagination generates an elaborate string of lies to exact the Fall of humankind: “Unlike him, they do not depend on lies, so the constant imaginative effort by which Satan sustains himself is foreign to them”(p. 141). And, while Carey believes that Satan’s

“imaginativeness is impressive,”(p. 142) he also admires his turbulent passionate life, and the changeable and murky consciousness which give his character mystery, complexity, or “depth.” Though Carey claims to occupy neutral ground, he ends up gravitating towards the Satanist camp.

Harold Bloom⁴² not only reveres Satan as one his favourite literary figures, but also sees him as the triumph of Milton’s poetical output: “I cannot believe that Milton himself ever started out the day with a neo-Christian Good Morning’s Hatred of his own greatest achievement in poetic representation, a hero-villain surpassing even his most direct literary forerunners, Shakespeare’s Richard III, Edmund, Iago, and Macbeth”(p. 99). Bloom judges the literary merits of Satan in the same way as he does those of important Shakespearian characters, such as Richard III and Macbeth. He thus rejects as irrelevant to an assessment of Satan as a literary figure the moral arguments of the anti-Satanist critics — particularly Lewis — who see Satan as the Devil, as the opposite of God, and therefore as a “nonbeing,” to use Fish’s term. Unlike these critics, Bloom is greatly impressed with the immense passion displayed in Satan’s character: “pathos is his glory, his abiding strength”(p. 109). It is this abundant passion in Satan which defines his place among Milton’s poetic characters: “Satan is . . . rather the strongest representative of the priority of pathos over logos throughout Milton’s poetry”(p. 101). Yet, despite the imbalance between passion and reason, Bloom argues that “this hardly means that reason is lacking in Satan”(p. 102). Thus, at the same time as he affirms Satan as a figure of great passion, Bloom also reiterates the view of Satanists such as Stoll, Waldock, and

⁴² Harold Bloom, *Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Empson who regard Satan as a rational agent. This view confirms Bloom as a strong Satanist critic.

For over three hundred years, then, from the first observations of Dryden to the critical accounts of late twentieth-century critics, Milton's Satan has provoked extensive and varied criticism. Over this period of time, we can see that some critics have been enormously impressed by Satan, while others have been singularly unimpressed by him, and yet others have taken more moderate positions. Yet whatever the difference of opinion over Satan may be, there can surely be only universal agreement with Carey's comment that "The power to entangle and excite readers is an observable feature of the Satan figure."⁴³ Some further generalisations about this tradition are possible, and it is in relation to these general features that I will endeavour to contribute to this tradition.

First, the arguments of those who are unimpressed by the figure of Satan. Many of the anti-Satanists and the more moderate critics, such as Rajan and Gardner, see Satan as a highly irrational being. And the main reason they see him as being irrational is that he fails to understand the futility of rebelling against an omnipotent god. Lewis provides further evidence for the view that Satan is irrational: his debate with Abdiel during which he asserts his "doctrine that he is a self-existent being;"⁴⁴ his empire in Hell "based on perfect misery, and therefore diminishing with each alleviation of that misery;"⁴⁵ his project to ruin hapless man. And Fish describes Satan as irrational because he neglects the best part of his being, the capacity to reason logically which unites all men and angels with God. A second view shared by most anti-Satanists is that Satan is a morally depraved character, though critics differ over exactly what moral depravity is. For

⁴³ Carey, p. 133.

⁴⁴ Lewis, p. 97.

Addison and Johnson, God is the moral centre of the poem, and Satan's direct opposition to God is thus highly immoral. As the Devil who violates all the tenets of Christian morality, Satan is, as Lewis puts it, "the salacious grotesque, half bogey and half buffoon, of popular tradition."⁴⁶ Thirdly, some of the most significant anti-Satanists fail to be impressed by Satan because he is in important ways not sufficiently human to arouse our interest. This view originates with Addison, Blair, and Johnson, but elements of it are also visible in Musgrove, Rajan, and Fish. The main grounds cited by anti-Satanists, then, are that Satan is irrational, immoral, and inhuman.

In attempting to identify a single feature common to the arguments of all the critics who admire Satan, Carey cites courage: "Satanist critics generally emphasize Satan's courage."⁴⁷ While Satan's courage is admired by many critics, it is only one of a number of attributes which they collectively admire. First, with the exception of Waldo and Empson, all Satanists and the more moderate critics are impressed by Satan's passion. Early in the eighteenth century, John Dennis, we recall, admires the humanity of Satan's emotion, and so throughout the critical tradition, especially in the Romantic period, the admiration of almost all Satanists for Satan is grounded in part in a recognition of his passion. According to Blake, passion imparts energy and activity to Satan, while for Hazlitt and Shelley the greatness of his passion lies in its intemperateness and ferocity. Bloom is taken by the priority of passion over reason in Satan. Differing slightly from these critics are Stoll, Hamilton, Gardner, and Carey who admire the tensions generated within Satan by the violent conflict between his strong emotions. Satan's emotional conflict can thus be seen as a second feature

⁴⁵ Lewis, p. 98.

⁴⁶ Lewis, p. 99.

admired by many of the Satanists. Many Satanist critics are also greatly impressed by Satan's virtue. This is again highly prevalent in the Romantic period where Satan is championed not only because of his courage, fortitude, and perseverance, but also, at least for Shelley, because of his moral superiority to God. Satan's virtue is also reaffirmed by the later Satanists Macaulay, Stoll, Empson, and Bloom. Several other Satanists are also impressed by Satan's ability to reason soundly. This view is clearly displayed by Stoll, Waldock, and Empson who all vigorously assert that because Satan had a strong and reasonable motive, his rebellion against God was a rational undertaking. Finally, some Satanist critics also admire Satan's thought. Gardner, Gross, and Carey are impressed by this because thought reveals further dimensions of Satan's complex mind and consciousness. The Satanists, then, ground their position in observations of Satan's passion, emotional conflict, virtue, reason, and thought.

In response to this extensive history of literary criticism on Satan, this thesis will argue that by virtue of his consciousness, will, reason, and passion, Satan is a character whose nature is not in fact supernatural but fundamentally and essentially the same as that of an exceptional human being. The premise of this argument is that a human being is a being that has limited forms of consciousness, thought, will, reason, and passion, and that "exceptional" means strong, rare, unrelenting, and driven, and not necessarily admirable or praiseworthy in a moral sense. In making this argument, I will take issue with early anti-Satanists, such as Dryden, Addison, Blair, and Johnson, and modern anti-Satanists, such as Williams, Lewis, Musgrove, and Fish who fail to recognise Satan's exceptional human qualities, especially his reason. I also challenge Johnson's claim that readers are not greatly interested in

⁴⁷ Carey, p. 133.

Paradise Lost because it lacks human interest. This, I will argue, is false, on account of Satan's exceptional human character. In asserting my central thesis, I will thus align myself with some of the Satanists I have discussed. However, I will also distinguish myself from them by providing a detailed description of Satan's consciousness, will, reason, and passion. In so doing, I aim to advance the Satanist critics' understanding of Satan by demonstrating that when all these particular features of Satan's character are taken together he can be seen as an exceptional human being. Thus, I will explicitly argue for a claim that Satanists either gloss over or simply assume: Satan is essentially human. And it is because he is essentially human that he has fascinated Satanists and anti-Satanists alike. Let us begin, then, with an account of Satan's consciousness and will.

CHAPTER 2

Satan's Consciousness and Will

During the infernal council in Book II, Satan, "Conscious of highest worth"(II, 429), prepares himself to address the assembly of rebel angels. This description of Satan identifies one of his most important characteristics: his awareness of his own status and value. But while Satan, like us, has an awareness of himself as a being, in his case, this awareness is so powerful that it becomes an all-consuming obsession with self. In this chapter I will argue first, that it is the extraordinary intensity of Satan's consciousness of himself and of this exceptional "worth" that makes him like an exceptional human being. His definition as such a being is further enhanced by the second fundamental attribute of his character: will. In the second part of this chapter, then, I will concentrate on the extraordinary object of Satan's will, his rigid adherence to this mighty will, its strength, intensity, and sheer obstinacy.

Satan shares sinfulness with all of humankind who joined his company as a result of the Fall of Adam and Eve. This connection between Satan and humankind is noted by Isabel MacCaffrey in her book *Paradise Lost as "Myth,"* when she writes, "Human pain, struggle, confusion, and (one must add) energy and courage, are brought together in a creature who, while not technically human, shares the relevant human condition: he is sinful and hedged about with limitations."¹ The feature which MacCaffrey believes Satan shares with humankind centres primarily on Satan's

“relevant human condition,” that is, his sinfulness and limitations. However, while Satan, like us, is indubitably fallen and limited, these broad terms overlook the particular ways in which we can be sinful and limited. It is in relation to our general humanity understood in terms of consciousness, thought, will, reason, and passion, that sin and limitation take shape. Satan is like an exceptional human being in part because his limitations and failings are evident in the way he is conscious of himself and the world.

The first fundamental similarity between Satan’s consciousness and ours is that he, like even the most devout Christian, is concerned to a certain extent with himself, and not absolutely with God. This dimension of fallen consciousness clearly differentiates both Satan and ourselves from the poem’s unfallen characters, who display instead a disregard of self in their completely devoted service of God. This is evident in Book V, where Abdiel not only bears the scorn and ridicule of all Satan’s army but also the imminent threat of physical violence, in order to uphold the word and truth of God:

. From amidst them forth he pass’d,
 Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustain’d
 Superior, nor of violence fear’d aught. (V, 903-5)

Unlike the unfallen angels, Satan is concerned with himself, and not with how he may best serve God. This sharp difference is noted by Williams when he writes, “The casting-out of the rebel angels from Heaven is the result of the conflict between . . . the state which is in utter union with Omnipotence and the state which is only in union with

¹ Isabel G. MacCaffrey, *Paradise Lost as “Myth”* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) p. 181.

itself.”² Satan’s self-concern is also noted by Lewis, who observes how in Satan’s opening speech in Hell, his interest swings all too quickly to his “fixt mind” and sense of “injured merit.”³ It is again clearly manifested in his second speech, where Satan ignores Beelzebub’s expressions of regret and concern at their “sad overthrow and foul defeat”(I, 135), and looks only to impress his own attitude upon his flagging deputy: “Fall’n Cherub, to be weak is miserable / Doing or Suffering”(I, 157-8). Furthermore, just as Satan’s speech is deeply marked by his concern with himself, so too is his inner thought, evident in Book IV where the sight of Adam and Eve’s tender embraces causes Satan to think at once of himself, and of his own lack of pleasure:

. [they] shall enjoy their fill
Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust,
Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
Among our other torments not the least,
Still unfulfill’d with pain of longing pines. (IV, 507-11)

Unlike the poem’s unfallen characters, Satan’s thoughts are not always of God, but instead display, like his speech, concern with the self.

As representatives of ourselves, fallen Adam and Eve also display characteristics which reinforce the likeness between Satan’s consciousness and ours. In their unfallen state, Adam and Eve are like the unfallen angels: primarily concerned with serving God. Yet after the Fall, this awareness is replaced by a predominant concern with themselves. They thus display what Gross describes as “The deep solipsism that the mind discovers in its fall.”⁴ This is first apparent in the inner thought

² Williams, p. 260.

³ Lewis, p. 102.

⁴ Gross, p. 339.

manifested by Eve's soliloquy, brought on by the act of eating the forbidden fruit in Book IX. Midway through the soliloquy, Eve says to herself,

..... But to Adam in what sort
 Shall I appear? shall I to him make known
 As yet my change, and give him to partake
 Full happiness with mee, or rather not,
 But keep the odds of Knowledge in my power
 Without Copartner? (IX, 816-21)

Before the Fall, Eve is mainly concerned with God and Adam. Here, however, we see her thinking about how she can work a situation to obtain an outcome most advantageous for herself. This concern with self becomes even more evident at the end of her soliloquy. Fearing death may result from her actions, Eve considers what might happen in her absence:

..... I shall be no more,
 And Adam wedded to another Eve,
 Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
 A death to think. Confirm'd then I resolve,
 Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe. (IX, 827-31)

The thought of Adam loving another woman after Eve's death hurts her, and in order to protect herself from the pain she resolves to embroil Adam in her sin. The decision is motivated purely from personal interest. She looks only to fulfil her own needs which, as we see in Book X, is also Adam's priority. Here he thinks of the relief from fear and suffering swift death would bring:

..... how gladly would I meet

Mortality my sentence, and be Earth
 Insensible
 there I should rest
 And sleep secure; his dreadful voice no more
 Would Thunder in my ears, nor fear of worse
 To mee and to my offspring would torment me
 With cruel expectation. (X, 775-7 / 78-82)

With this display of self-interest we see the fallen pair becoming like Satan. This transformation, or humanising of Adam and Eve is also observed by Stein who writes, “Until the human fall occurs, nothing in Satan’s experience fully coincides with the speech, actions, or inner life of Adam and Eve.”⁵ Given that fallen Adam and Eve are, as Addison puts it, “not only our Progenitors, but our Representatives,”⁶ the fact that Satan is like them means that Satan is like us.

Satan’s consciousness, then, resembles fallen human consciousness as it is represented in the poem, but it is also excessive and all-consuming. Lewis describes this in his *Preface to Paradise Lost* as “Satan’s monomaniac concern with himself.”⁷ It is the extraordinary intensity of Satan’s self-consciousness and self-concern that makes it like an exceptional human consciousness. This intensity is first evident in Satan’s flagrant lack of concern for his troops in Book I. As already noted, Satan, on waking from his trance in Hell, reflects on the war in Heaven and God’s superior strength which defeated him. Rather than thinking here of his eager troops who served him dutifully in the face of great opposition and without whom no substantial attack on God could have been made, Satan considers only his own position, deciding neither to “repent [n]or change”(I, 96). Furthermore, his thoughts for the near future run only to

⁵ Arnold Stein, *Art of Presence: The Poet and Paradise Lost* (Berkeley: University of Carolina Press, 1977) p. 84.

⁶ Addison, p. 565, no. 273.

his own agenda, which is to sustain war against God: “To wage by force or guile War / Irreconcilable, to our grand Foe”(I, 121-2). Satan gives no consideration to his troops, equally involved in and affected by the war, and now paying a horrible price:

..... condemn'd
 For ever now to have their lot in pain,
 Millions of Spirits for his fault amerc't
 Of Heav'n, and from Eternal Splendours flung
 For his revolt. (I, 607-11)

Satan's lack of concern for the interests of his fellow angels highlights his excessive preoccupation with himself which is evident throughout the poem. As Lewis notes, “Book II opens with his speech from the throne; before we have had eight lines he is lecturing the assembly on his right to leadership. He meets Sin — and states his position. He sees the Sun; it makes him think of his own position.”⁸ However, Satan's “incessant autobiography”⁹ does not make him, as Lewis contends, like Austen's Miss Bates, whose narrow, insular, and repetitive life is rightly “a Hell of infinite boredom.”¹⁰ Rather, his intense preoccupation with himself is more like that exhibited by Shakespeare's Macbeth: it is fanatical, all-possessing, and focused. Though Lewis spurns such a person as Satan, the kind of intensity of self-interest Satan exhibits clearly sets him apart from the common and mediocre.

This “self-obsessiveness,”¹¹ as Bloom puts it, or this “solipsism [which] becomes a deadening and divisive egotism,”¹² as Gross puts it, is implicated in Satan's

⁷ Lewis, p. 102.

⁸ Lewis, p. 102.

⁹ Lewis, p. 102.

¹⁰ Lewis, p. 102.

¹¹ Bloom, p. 107.

¹² Gross, p. 339.

high opinion of himself. In Satan's second speech in Book I he tells Beelzebub that their purpose is to contravene God's will and to make evil out of all the good God generates,

Which oft-times may succeed, so as perhaps
 Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
 His inmost counsels from their destin'd aim. (I, 166-8)

Satan's high opinion of his own merit is revealed in these lines. Satan, we must remember, is one member of a vast army which boasts one third of the Heaven's angels: "with lies / [Satan] Drew after him the third part of Heav'n's Host"(V, 709-10). Even though he is the leader of this body of soldiers, Satan's suggestion in this passage is that God's "inmost counsels" will be disturbed only "if I fail not." Regardless of the countless number of seraphs and angelic powers who comprise his army, Satan sees himself as the *only* one who can have any telling affect on God's control. This high opinion of himself is also apparent in his next speech. Addressing himself again to Beelzebub, Satan declares,

..... Hail horrors, hail
 Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
 Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
 A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
 What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be, all but less than hee
 Whom Thunder hath made greater? (I, 250-8)

In his declarative greeting to the new world of horrors and Hell, Satan tells them to “Receive thy new Possessor.” Notice that the word “possessor” is only in the singular form. Again, irrespective of his vast army, he views himself above all others as the one who shall be the absolute ruler of Hell. In these speeches Satan displays the kind of high self-estimation commonly found in the exceptional human beings of tragedy, such as Coriolanus who boasts to the Volscians, “Alone I did it”(V, v, 115).

Another dimension of Satan’s consciousness which makes him appear human derives from the fact that when he is on earth his ability to see is limited, so that he sees only what humans are capable of seeing (we recall that one of the symptoms of our fallen condition which MacCaffrey identifies is our “limitations.”¹³) Satan’s limitations are revealed at the beginning of Book IV, where he is unable to see Heavenly things on first reaching earth. Having alighted on the summit of Mt. Niphates, one of the first things Satan does is to look around and regain his bearings:

Sometimes towards Eden which now in his view
Lay pleasant, his griev’d look he fixes sad,
Sometimes towards Heav’n and the full-blazing Sun,
Which now sat high in his Meridian Tow’r. (IV, 27-30)

Satan looks down “towards Eden” which he sees unfolding beneath him. Then, as he shifts his view to look up “towards Heav’n,” he sees not the vast realm of Heaven, but “the full-blazing Sun.” However, during Satan’s voyage through Heaven in Book II, his ability to see is substantially greater. For example, on reaching the quieter peripheries of Chaos, Satan pauses to look and sees in front of him,

¹³ MacCaffrey, p. 180.

Far off th'Empyrean Heav'n, extended wide
 In circuit, undetermin'd square or round,
 With Opal Tow'rs and Battlements adorn'd
 Of living Sapphire. (II, 1047-50)

Whereas here Satan sees the glorious ramparts of Heaven with his own eyes, on earth no such vision is afforded him. As he gazes upwards from Mt. Niphates' top to where he knows Heaven ought to lie, all he can see is the noon-day sun. Thus, when he is on earth the things which he is conscious of through his sense of sight are limited to what a human would see. The glances that Satan casts from the mountain top on earth reveal that his consciousness is no longer supernatural, but limited to human proportions.

The likeness of Satan's consciousness to ours is again evident as the reader is exposed to Paradise and its inhabitants through the eyes of Satan: everything we see is as Satan sees it. The first view through Satan's eyes comes as he looks down at Paradise from the top of the Tree of Life in Book IV: "Beneath him with new wonder now he views / To all delight of human sense expos'd . . . / Nature's whole wealth"(IV, 205-7). We see first of all the outlying areas of Paradise, following "Southward through Eden . . . a River large,"(IV, 223) and then his view shifts to take in the beautiful, abundant flora:

..... or the flow'ry lap
 Of some irriguous Valley spread her store,
 Flow'rs of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose:
 Another side, umbrageous Grotts and Caves
 Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling Vine
 Lays forth her purple Grape. (IV, 254-9)

We also witness Adam and Eve through Satan's eyes: "the Fiend / Saw undelighted all delight, all kind / Of living Creatures . . . Two of far nobler shape erect and tall, Godlike erect"(IV, 285-7 / 88-9). That all these sights are seen through the eyes of Satan is confirmed by the long period of time he takes to conduct his inspection of Paradise:

..... in th'ascending Scale
 Of Heav'n the Stars that usher Evening rose:
 When Satan still in gaze, as first he stood,
 Scarce thus at length fail'd speech recover'd sad.
 (IV, 354-7)

When Satan arrives on earth the sun is high in the midday sky; now the stars are becoming visible as evening approaches. All afternoon Satan "in gaze, as first he stood" has been surveying the scenery. In over one hundred and fifty lines, a detailed account of the sumptuous garden of Eden, its environs, and inhabitants has been given in "stream of consciousness" type narrative through Satan's mind. What we see is exactly as Satan sees it, with no conversion or translation required to ensure our comprehension. In this way Satan's consciousness of Paradise is not beyond the limits of our understanding, but the same as ours.

This similarity is further evident when we consider the consciousness of the good angels. Raphael's consciousness is different from ours because things which he experiences are never directly seen by the reader, but are instead translated into a form humans can understand. This is evident first in Book V, where Adam asks Raphael to inform him of the past. Adam's request prompts a remark from Raphael which reveals the vast distance between his supernatural consciousness and Adam's human one:

Sad task and hard, for how shall I relate
 To human sense th'invisible exploits
 Of warring Spirits
 [of] what surmounts the reach
 Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
 By lik'ning spiritual to corporeal forms,
 As may express them best. (V, 564-6 / 71-4)

Raphael agrees to relate past events, but his account of the war in Heaven and of the Creation is altered for Adam's consciousness. Only "By lik'ning spiritual to corporeal forms" will Raphael's version come within the limits of human comprehension. As one of the vehicles which communicates the past to us, he recreates it in a language which Adam (and thus the reader) will understand. The same process of translation is used by Michael as he unfolds to Adam the future of his race in Book XII:

Much thou hast yet to see, but I perceive
 Thy mortal sight to fail; objects divine
 Must needs impair and weary human sense:
 Henceforth what is to come I will relate,
 Thou therefore give due audience, and attend.
 (XII, 8-12)

As Adam is overloaded with "objects divine," Michael intervenes and proceeds to "relate" the remainder of humankind's story in terms compatible with "human sense." We do not become aware of events directly as Raphael and Michael became aware of them because supernatural consciousness is foreign to human understanding. However, as Satan views Eden from the Tree of Life, we are inside Satan's consciousness, and seeing directly what Satan sees. This unmediated experience provides an instant vision

of everything in this region. Satan's consciousness is shown to us because it *is* within the limits of our understanding, because it is the same as ours.

Memory is yet another aspect of Satan's consciousness which makes it like ours. In his fallen state, Satan's awareness of the past is no longer perfect but, like ours, is clouded by moments of forgetfulness (this is one aspect of what Carey notes as "the fallen Satan's psychology"¹⁴). In contrast, the unfallen angels display perfect memory of past happenings, as when Raphael, responding to Adam's requests for information about the past, displays faultless recollection of the minutiae of the war in Heaven and of the Creation of earth and humankind. Satan, on the other hand, forgets certain details about the past. In Book II he fails to recognise Sin and Death at the gates of Hell:

..... why
 In this infernal Vale first met thou call'st
 Me Father, and that Phantasm call'st my Son?
 I know thee not, nor ever saw till now
 Sight more detestable than him and thee. (II, 741-5)

Realising that he has forgotten them, Sin endeavours to jog Satan's memory by recounting facts about the past, including how he gave birth to her from the side of his head:

All on a sudden miserable pain
 Surpris'd thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
 In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast
 Threw forth, till on the left side op'ning wide,

 Out of thy head I sprung. (II, 752-5 / 58)

¹⁴ Carey, p. 136.

Despite this vivid account of the past, Satan still does not recall the events Sin describes, as is obvious in the first line of Satan's reply: "Dear Daughter, since thou claim'st me for thy Sire"(II, 817). At first the title "Dear Daughter" appears suitably paternal, as if Satan has remembered his relationship with Sin. However, key words in the clause which follows this introduction reveal that this is not the case. First, the clause is headed by the word "since" in the sense of "seeing that," or "given that." In light of this, then, the line (with the end of the passage included to complete the idea) reads, "Sin, given that you consider me to be your father . . . know / I come no enemy"(II, 817/ 21-2). Based on the strength with which Sin is convinced of her lineage, Satan leaves it standing as an event that could possibly have happened. Rather than flatly disputing or rejecting what she says, Satan lets her hold her own opinion, but gives no admission that he has remembered the event of which she speaks. This is reinforced in the same line by the word "claim'st." One meaning of this word is to state, propose, or assert a position as in an argument. The implication, then, is that Satan's fatherhood is merely conjecture, or a point of view held by Sin, which reveals further doubt about her story. This capacity to forget is observed by Carey, who writes, "The fallen Satan is, we gather, a creature of moods, apprehending reality through mists of . . . forgetfulness."¹⁵ Because Satan's memory in its fallen state is imperfect and prone to lapses, we may well recognise ourselves in him, and therefore, unlike Johnson, find him to be a subject of human interest.

But Satan's memory also enters into his extraordinary commitment to oppose God. We first see this in Satan's opening speech to Beelzebub in Book I, where he remembers his life in Heaven. As he rolls in "the fiery Gulf"(I, 52) he both remembers

¹⁵ Carey, p. 137.

and foresees: “now the thought / Both of lost happiness and lasting pain / Torments him”(I, 54-6). He then sees Beelzebub in his ruined condition for the first time, which brings memories of Beelzebub’s former glory flooding back:

If thou beest he; 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. (I, 84-7)

Not only does Satan remember the magnificent lustre of Beelzebub’s former stature, but he also thinks back to the war with his almighty foe:

..... so much the stronger prov’d
He with his Thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire Arms? (I, 92-4)

Despite the huge change and loss that these memories reveal to Satan, they nonetheless fuel his attitude towards God, for in the very next lines he expresses with conviction his intention to remain opposed to Him:

..... yet not for those
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage
Can else inflict do I repent or change,
Though chang’d in outward lustre. (I, 94-7)

From these memories is born Satan’s resolution to remain as he is. Satan’s thoughts of former life in Heaven and of the war which he lost drive him to continue to oppose God. What makes Satan exceptional here is the way in which his memory of life in Heaven, rather than evoking sadness, regret, and repentance in him as might occur in

many of us, instead drives him to persist in the attitudes by virtue of which he lost that life.

Satan's memory is also deeply connected with the excessive egotism which we observed in his early speeches in Book I. Satan's "state of self-love,"¹⁶ as Williams calls it, is so intense that he cannot remember his unfallen life in Heaven in terms of actual experience. Now banished from Heaven, Satan cannot perceive his experiences during that stage of his existence through his then unfallen consciousness, but sees them instead only through his present fallen and power-hungry consciousness. We see this in his memory of his life in Heaven, which is brought on by the sun's bright beams in his sun soliloquy:

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. (IV, 37-9)

Satan's opening memory of his former life is of his own status, of "how glorious" he shone in his bright, heavenly effulgence, and not, as one might expect, of how he delighted to use his "favour and preeminence"(V, 661) in the service of God. This infatuation with his high status is revealed once again as Satan recalls the character flaw which lost him Heaven:

..... lifted up so high
I 'sdain'd subjection, and thought one step higher
Would set me highest. (IV, 49-51)

¹⁶ Williams, p. 258.

Instead of remembering this critical act as gross disobedience against God's will, he sees his fall in terms of the high position he occupied which made him seek more power. Thus Satan avoids acknowledging his true crime and reveals his preoccupation with the important station he held in Heaven. This is further evident when Satan speculates about the past which in his mind might have been better if God had created things differently: "O had his powerful Destiny ordain'd / Me some inferior Angel, I had stood / Then happy"(IV, 58-60). Here he again conceptualises himself in terms of hierarchy, suggesting that if only he had been "some inferior Angel" then everything might have been well. Even when Satan recreates the past in his mind, it is centred around his former high position in Heaven. Satan's memory reveals this enveloping egotism because his memory of experiences during his unfallen life has been re-read and interpreted through his fallen consciousness of power and glory. His true past is lost, and is now perceived in terms of his present state. Like other dimensions of his consciousness, then, Satan's memory of heavenly life reveals, as Coleridge puts it, "the alcohol of egotism."¹⁷

While features of Satan's consciousness define it as that of an exceptional human being, his tremendous will does this as well. Already preoccupied with himself and his power, a further symptom of Satan's fallen state of being is that he has individual interests he wishes to pursue separately from God. This distinguishes him from the unfallen angels whose will is to live for God's will, as revealed in the attitude of the seraph Abdiel: "let mee serve / In Heav'n God ever blest, and his Divine / Behests obey, worthiest to be obey'd"(VI, 183-5). Not only do the unfallen angels

¹⁷ Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. H. N. Coleridge, vol. 1, (1836; New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967) p. 175.

faithfully serve God, but in putting God before themselves, they take pleasure in living as one collective body for God: “Under his great Vice-gerent Reign abide / United as one individual Soul / For ever happy”(V, 609-11). This is epitomised in Christ’s voluntary sacrifice for the sins of Adam and Eve: “as a sacrifice / Glad to be offer’d, he attends the will / Of his great Father”(III, 269-71). In short, God *is* the purpose of life for the unfallen characters. In contrast, Satan lives independently of God’s will; he is, as Williams writes, “the Image of personal clamour for personal independence.”¹⁸ Satan does not feel answerable to God, nor to any obligation set by Him; he responds only to his personal aims and interests. This will, or “independence,” as Williams puts it, is evident in Satan’s second speech to Beelzebub in Book II:

..... but of this be sure,
 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, 158-62)

Satan’s will is to oppose God’s “high will,” and to fulfil an ambition independent of God. This reflects the humanity represented by Eve immediately after she disobeys God, since she is concerned with advancing herself and her power. Satan’s “resolution from despair”(I, 191) in Hell is thus like the human will immediately after the Fall.

One of the things that makes Satan’s will extraordinary is that it is a will not just to oppose God, but also to attain God’s power, power which the poem clearly establishes as being absolute. This is first evident in Satan’s reaction to God’s appointment of the Messiah in Book V by which God grants Christ all power:

¹⁸ Williams, p. 260.

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. (V, 603-8)

At this great spectacle, we are told by Raphael that “All seem'd well pleas'd, all seem'd, but were not all”(V, 617). In contrast to the attitude of the entire company of Heaven, Satan “could not bear / Through pride the sight, and thought himself impair'd / Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain”(V, 664-6). Satan reacts in this way because “all Power”(III, 317) which God granted Christ is what Satan wants. This is further evident when, having brooded on the event of the naming of Messiah, Satan that night then decides to “dislodge, and leave / Unworshipt, unobey'd the Throne supreme”(V,669-70). The implication of the transitive verb “dislodge” is that its object is something of considerable weight, such as the “Throne supreme,” something that is heavy, solid, and robust. Like this mighty edifice, the object of Satan's will — God's power — is magnificent. Although Satan wages war against God in part out of “malice” and “disdain,” he does it principally out of the will to all power, as we are informed at the beginning of the poem:

He trusted to have equall'd the most High,
 If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
 Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
 Rais'd impious War in Heav'n, and Battle proud
 With vain attempt. (I, 40-44)

By military force, Satan endeavours to equal “the most High” and thereby gain the superlative degree of power which was given to Christ when God decreed him “Heir of all my might”(V, 720). As Hazlitt puts it, “His aim was no less than the throne of the universe.”¹⁹ Satan’s will, then, is not just the will to power but the will to *absolute* power, “all Power”(III, 317) that God granted to Christ.

Satan’s rigid adherence to this extraordinary will further establishes him as a remarkable figure. As we have already seen, Satan initially “resolv’d / . . . to dislodge, and leave / Unworshipt, unobey’d the Throne supreme”(V, 668-70). In Book VI, the entire episode of the war in Heaven is a vivid affirmation of Satan’s mighty will. In the heat of battle the object of his will is confirmed when he tells his troops that the purpose of their fighting is the “Honour, Dominion, Glory, and renown”(VI, 422) of God. In Hell, after the battle, Satan maintains his “fixt mind”(I, 97). This steadfast commitment to his will to all power is revealed again in Satan’s third speech to Beelzebub in Book I, where he compares his power to God’s: “What matter where, if I be still the same, / And what I should be, all but less than hee / Whom Thunder hath made greater?”(I, 256-8). Satan believes that what he “should be” is still “all but less than hee,” which means nothing less than equal with God. Thus, Satan’s will in Hell remains what it was in Heaven: the will to God’s power. On earth, too, and now in the name of evil, his will is the same:

Evil be thou my Good; by thee at least
Divided Empire with Heav’n’s King I hold
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign. (IV, 110-12)

¹⁹ Hazlitt, p. 63.

Through total opposition to God's goodness, Satan's will, however misguided, is to overthrow God's empire, taking with him that proportion of power which accompanies the division. This remains Satan's fixed intention as late in the poem as Book IX. Posing the question to himself in his "O Earth" soliloquy of what it would take for him ever to live on earth or in Heaven again, he provides his own answer when he thinks, "But neither here seek I, no nor in Heav'n / To dwell, unless by mast'ring Heav'n's Supreme"(IX, 124-5). In the words of Hazlitt, "His love of power and contempt for suffering are never once relaxed from the highest pitch of intensity."²⁰ Thus, Satan is exceptional because of the way he remains true to his will to God's power.

Lewis fails to see this when he claims,

He begins by fighting for 'liberty', however misconceived; but almost at once sinks to fighting for 'Honour, Dominion, glorie, and renoune'(VI, 422). Defeated in this, he sinks to that great design which makes the main subject of the poem — the design of ruining two creatures who had never done him any harm, no longer in the serious hope of victory, but only to annoy the Enemy whom he cannot directly attack . . . such is the progress of Satan.²¹

First, the notion of 'liberty,' in whose name Lewis believes Satan to be fighting is not the object of his will, but is instead an emotive and powerful term which Satan employs in his "calumnious Art / Of counterfeited truth"(V, 770-1) to deceive his fellow angels into following him to war. We see this in Book V:

Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
The supple knee? ye will not, if I trust
To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves

²⁰ Hazlitt, p. 64.

²¹ Lewis, p. 99.

Natives and Sons of Heav'n possess before
 By none, and if not equal all, yet free,
 Equally free; for Orders and Degrees
 Jar not with liberty, but well consist. (V, 787-93)

Satan is far too shrewd a figure to say always to his troops what he himself thinks. On this point, Lewis should heed some of his own wisdom when he remarks rather ironically that "The poet did not foresee that his work would one day meet the disarming simplicity of critics who take for gospel things said by the father of falsehood in public speeches to his troops."²² Furthermore, Satan's genuine agenda for power is later revealed during council on the battlefield in Book VI:

O now in danger tri'd, now known in Arms
 Not to be overpower'd, Companions dear,
 Found worthy not of Liberty alone,
 Too mean pretense, but what we more affect,
 Honour, Dominion, Glory, and renown. (VI, 418-22)

Liberty is a "mean pretense" and is openly replaced by the true ambition to take God's "Honour, Dominion, Glory, and renown." Satan's next "great design," that of ruining Adam and Eve, which in Lewis' view completes the debasement of Satan's will, serves instead as further proof of his rigid adherence to his tremendous will. The plan to beguile humankind is not a totally distinct project, but is rather a means to a greater end: to gain God's power. Satan's first speech in Book II reveals the important function served by ruining the human pair:

.....we now return
 To claim our just inheritance of old,
 Surer to prosper than prosperity

²² Lewis, p. 100.

Could have assur'd us; and by what best way,
 Whether of open War or covert guile,
 We now debate. (II, 37-42)

While proceeding diplomatically in collective terms — “we,” “our,” “us” — Satan clearly indicates that his will is fixed well beyond the immediate or short-term object of ruining man, and on the greater ambition of securing his “just inheritance of old,” which for him is “all Power”(III, 317). The object of Satan’s will, then, does not change, but remains essentially the same throughout the poem — it is thus not the will of a weak, pitiful, or corrupt man, but of an exceptional one.

The remarkable intensity, strength, and power of Satan’s will is evident from the outset of the poem. Although only recently condemned to Hell, Satan perseveres in his will to God’s power despite the immense hardship and misery he experiences. Something of this enormous suffering is revealed early in Book I where Satan, waking in Hell, is deeply wounded by the memory of what he was in Heaven, “great in Power, / In favour and preeminence,”(V, 660-61) and which now is no more: “for now the thought / Both of lost happiness and lasting pain / Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes / That witness’d huge affliction and dismay”(I, 53-7). Satan is also to be endlessly tormented by the “lasting pain” of Hell where “hope never comes / That comes to all; but torture without end / Still urges”(I, 66-8). However, despite this immeasurable loss and suffering, Satan persists with his cause, displaying, as Hazlitt puts it, “the strongest will left to resist or to endure.”²³ This is illustrated in the positive attitude he imparts in this speech to Beelzebub, despite their great loss on the battlefield:

²³ Hazlitt, p. 63.

All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,
 And courage never to submit or yield:
 And what is else not to be overcome? (I, 106-9)

Amplifying the strength of Satan's will is the language. We notice this first in the choice of the powerful adjective "unconquerable"; in addition, the repeated use of the word "and" at the start of the last three lines generates a sense of unrelenting drive throughout the passage. Armed with these attributes, Satan then urges Beelzebub that they "may with more successful hope resolve / To wage by force or guile eternal War / Irreconcilable, to our grand Foe"(I, 120-2). The language here is equally strong. Despite their great loss and ruin, Satan's intention is to have his troops "resolve" to continue in opposition to God, whether it be by means of force or guile. Satan's mind is fixed squarely upon "War," and he will brook no alternative course of action; the conviction and assuredness of the verb "resolve" further reinforces the power of his will. The intensity and strength of Satan's will is thus illustrated by the fact that it drives him on in spite of horrible loss and pain.

Satan's will is also extraordinary in that it remains unchanged even in the face of reason. This obstinacy is first evident in Satan's resolution to engage God in war, despite strong indications that this is extremely irrational. As Williams notes, "the drama lies not in that foolish effort but in the terror of the obstinacy that provoked it."²⁴ As a being of high archangelic standing, Satan is well aware of God's omnipotence, and therefore well aware of the futility of opposing him with military force. Yet even in light of this certain knowledge, Satan attempts to fight for omnipotence. This

seemingly paradoxical situation is also observed by Carey who writes that “the fiction requires [Satan], though an archangelically rational creature, to take up arms against a God who is axiomatically omnipotent.”²⁵ The way in which Satan’s will is impervious to reason (and therefore not free) is made clear by Abdiel when he says reproachfully to Satan, “Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall’d”(VI, 181). Satan’s will ignores some dictates of reason, and answers instead only to himself. This is again evident when in Book VI Abdiel emphatically lays before Satan the reality of God’s infinite might:

..... fool, not to think how vain
 Against th’Omnipotent to rise in Arms;
 Who out of smallest things could without end
 Have rais’d incessant Armies to defeat
 Thy folly. (VI, 135-9)

Yet Satan spurns these words with “scornful eye”(VI, 149) and thinks only of violence and military conflict:

..... Ill for thee, but in wisht hour
 Of my revenge
 the first assay
 Of this right hand provok’t, since first that tongue
 Inspir’d with contradiction durst oppose
 A third part of the Gods, in Synod met.
 (VI, 150-1 / 153-6)

In spite of Abdiel’s express statement of the reality of God’s omnipotence, Satan’s will responds only to scorn, “revenge,” and its own desire for power. While showing his

²⁴ Williams, p. 258.

²⁵ Carey, p. 135.

will to be enthralled, and perhaps even corrupt,²⁶ as some critics have held, this also reveals a terrible obstinacy in its great separation from and blindness to reason.

This imperviousness to reason is also revealed in the horrible and devastating consequences Satan is willing to bear in order to gain “all Power.” The first of these is eternal perdition in Hell. Since Satan has divine intelligence, it can be assumed that he has a thorough understanding of God’s will and the serious penalties which await any angel who contravenes it. In God’s speech to the angels in Book V, Satan and all the assembly are powerfully reminded of this:

. him who disobeys
Mee disobeys, breaks union, and that day
Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
Into utter darkness, deep engulft, his place
Ordain’d without redemption, without end.
(V, 611-5)

At peril of losing the bliss of Heaven and being consigned for all time to the torment and misery of Hell, Satan “resolv’d / With all his Legions to dislodge, and leave / Unworshipt, unobey’d the Throne supreme”(V, 667-70). Furthermore, Satan is prepared not only to wreak destruction on himself, but also to inflict the same fate on his numberless ranks of angels. Without their collective strength Satan cannot mount his campaign to gain power from God, and so with “counterfeited truth”(V, 771) he seduces them to his party. The fact that this is not their war is revealed during its aftermath in Book I, when Satan, surveying the wreckage, sees “The fellows of his crime, the *followers* rather”(I, 606 my italics). The angels are merely pawns, used and

²⁶ Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* — “As a consequence the same rebellion . . . means misery for the feelings and corruption for the will”(p. 97).

expended by Satan in the pursuit of his tremendous will. As Hazlit notes, “His aim was no less than the throne of the universe; his means, myriads of angelic armies bright, the third part of the Heavens, whom he lured after him with his countenance.”²⁷ And as a consequence of Satan’s ambition, they are all

..... condemn’d
 For ever now to have their lot in pain,
 Millions of Spirits for his fault amerc’t
 Of Heav’n, and from Eternal Splendors flung
 For his revolt. (I, 607-11)

This reckless persistence is revealed in its most desperate and ignoble form in his first soliloquy in Book IX. At this late stage of his journey Satan seems to care no longer about anything but power. Despite knowing that the detriment to himself outweighs any advantage, his will, “by success untaught,”(II, 9) is to continue ruining humankind:

..... Revenge, at first though sweet,
 Bitter ere long back on itself recoils;
 Let it; I reck not, so it ’light well aim’d,
 Since higher I fall short. (IX, 171-4)

The brute obstinacy of Satan’s will to power is attested to by his willingness to sacrifice not only his own welfare, but also that of the legions of angels to its fulfilment.

Because of his consciousness and will, then, Satan emerges over the course of the poem not as a supernatural entity fundamentally and essentially different from human beings, but as an exceptional human being. As a character who is preoccupied with himself, Satan is like fallen Adam and Eve, and thus ourselves. In Satan’s case, however, this self-concern is excessive, and his self-centredness and obsession with

²⁷ Hazlitt, p. 63.

his own status and power overwhelms him in a manner similar to the way some of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, such as Macbeth and Richard III, are overwhelmed by their egotism. Comparing Satan to Macbeth, Bloom notes that "both hero-villains are terribly interesting to us because of their terrible inwardness. In them we find the self-obsessiveness that always makes us more interesting to ourselves than anyone else can be."²⁸ While Bloom's overview of human nature is questionable, he is right about the extreme interest with the self, or "self-obsessiveness" which these two memorable literary characters share. Like us, Satan is also limited in his awareness of the world. When he is on earth, Satan's sense of sight is limited to what humans are capable of seeing. Thus, the reader's unremitting experience through Satan's consciousness is only possible because his consciousness, unlike those of the unfallen angels, is not beyond the limits of our understanding, but is the *same* as ours. Similarly, Satan's memory is prone to lapses, and is therefore all too human. Satan's memory not only fuels his persistent antagonism with God, but also exposes his insuperable egotism again. Satan's will also enhances his likeness to a human being. Unlike the wills of the unfallen angels who are entirely committed to serving God, Satan's will, like ours, is answerable to ambitions which derive from the self. His will is extraordinary, however, because its object is not just power, or even great power, but the absolute power which God granted Christ. Satan's rigid adherence to this tremendous will, its strength and intensity, and the terrible obstinacy it reveals especially in its imperviousness to reason further establishes him as an exceptional human being. It is clear, then, that Addison and Johnson are mistaken in claiming that the poem lacks human interest. To reinforce my argument that Satan possesses attributes that

²⁸ Bloom, p. 107.

establish him as a remarkable and driven human being, and thus that the poem does contain human interest, the following chapter moves to assess the capacity of Satan's reason.

CHAPTER 3

Satan's Reason

Satan has been called many things by critics throughout the history of literary criticism on *Paradise Lost*. Egotistical, irrational, a hero, a fool, a general, a dissembler, and the father of lies — Satan has always had more than one face to present to his critics. But when critics have identified him as a reasoner, these arguments have been the least persuasive. However, provided that Satan and his reason are perceived and judged in relation to the context most appropriate to his fundamental state of being, his capacity to reason soundly cannot be denied. And it is in part because Satan, given what he is, is supremely rational that he resembles an exceptional human being.

First of all, two strong and opposing views of Satan's reason have dominated this critical tradition. As we have seen, the eighteenth-century anti-Satanists, such as Addison and Johnson assert that Satan is irrational, a view which is most fiercely restated by Lewis in his *Preface* of the 1940s: "Throughout the poem [Satan] is engaged in sawing off the branch he is sitting on . . . since a creature revolting against a creator is revolting against the source of his own powers . . . As a consequence the same rebellion which means misery for the feelings . . . also means Nonsense for the intellect."¹ This view, however, is opposed with equal vehemence by Satanists such as Waldock and Empson. In *Milton's God*, Empson argues strenuously that Satan is

rational, writing that “until Satan is in sight of Paradise he is convinced that God is *not* omnipotent,” and that “Satan no more set out to attack omnipotence than Belial did, and if he had done Belial would not have followed him.”² As already noted, a visible feature of the arguments of these schools of thought is that they do not acknowledge or even consider the opposite view. This one-sidedness, while a hallmark of these critical positions, is also a deficiency. This is because some of the key situations in the poem which involve Satan are ambivalent, and therefore necessitate a wider and more balanced reading than these critics permit. One especially problematic point in the narrative is the state of Satan’s being when he is in Heaven, in Books V and VI. Carey reveals this problem when he identifies a glaring incongruity between Satan’s unfallen reason and his actions in Heaven: “In the narrative [Milton] adopts, the omnipotence of God, which must have been evident to an archangelically intelligent Satan, coexists incongruously with a Satanic rebellion.”³ Satan is an archangel (“if not the first Arch-Angel”(V, 660)) and therefore a heavenly being with perfect intelligence, yet the act of war calls into question the unfallen perfection of his reason. Is Satan divinely perfect, or is he, as the rebellion suggests, fallen? The text does not establish this conclusively. This paradox in the fiction makes the task of assessing Satan’s reason much less straightforward because his state of being has a direct affect on the kind of reason he possesses. As an unfallen being, Satan’s capacity to reason will be very different from that of a fallen, imperfect, and sinful being. An accurate assessment of Satan’s reason is contingent, therefore, on the state of being in relation to which he is perceived. Given the two states in which

¹ Lewis, pp. 96-7.

² Empson, p. 37.

Satan may exist, there can be two contexts and two possible and equally valid perceptions of Satan's reason. Thus, the anti-Satanist and Satanist critics are wrong to see Satan as either exclusively irrational, or rational. Instead, he is both, depending on the context in which he is perceived.

In the context of unfallen being, Satan can be seen as irrational. It is in relation to this state that Williams views Satan, as is evident in his Introduction to *The English Poems of John Milton*:

Milton knew as well as we do that Omnipotence cannot be shaken; therefore the drama lies not in that foolish effort but in the terror of the obstinacy that provoked it, and in the result; not in the fight but in the fall. The irrepressible laughter of heaven at the solemn antics of "injured merit," of the "self impair'd," breaks out.⁴

Williams perceives Satan against the divine and unfallen background of "Omnipotence." From this perspective, we share in the "laughter of heaven at [Satan's] solemn antics," which are seen as a "foolish effort." This context is illustrated again as Lewis compares Satan to a character in Meredith's, *The Egoist*:

But it is a mistake to demand that Satan, any more than Sir Willoughby, should be able to rant and posture through the whole universe without, sooner or later, awakening the comic spirit. The whole nature of reality would have to be altered in order to give him such immunity, and it is not alterable. At that precise point where Satan or Sir Willoughby meets something real, laughter *must* arise.⁵

The "reality" of which Lewis talks is the state of heavenly and unfallen being — of Heaven, "Messiah," and "Divine appointment" — in which Satan is contained, and

³ Carey, p. 136.

⁴ Williams, p. 258.

hence perceived. In this context, then, his attempt to overthrow an all-powerful God with military force reveals, as Lewis urges, his lack of reason. Viewing Satan as “a native of Heaven,”⁶ his actions *are* highly irrational. Yet this does not mean that Satan is a raving idiot. We notice the terms Lewis himself uses to account for the abnormality of Satan’s rebellion in Heaven: “diseased, perverted, twisted.”⁷ Satan is a distorted and deluded occupant of Heaven (as he is also to some extent when fallen), but not a madman or a lunatic who rushes about blindly. In relation to the unfallen state, then, Satan is an extremely irrational being.

Yet this is not the only context in which Satan can be viewed. As a being who is in many fundamental ways fallen, Satan must be seen in relation to fallen consciousness. When, then, does Satan fall from heavenly grace, effecting the change of state which necessitates that he be seen in fallen terms? The precise point in the poem is not clearly determined. Does it occur in the earliest action in the poem at the end of Book V, as the mutiny in Heaven is planned? Or, is it during the aftermath of the War, when “headlong themselves they threw / Down from the verge of Heav’n, Eternal wrath / Burnt after them to the bottomless pit?”(VI, 864-66) On the other hand, does Satan fall in Book I, as “he with his horrid crew / Lay vanquisht, rolling in the fiery Gulf / Confounded?”(I, 51-3) Or, as some critics have claimed, is Satan in fact fallen before the story even begins, and the unfallen stage of his life outside the time-frame of the poem’s actual story? This view is held by John Carey, who remarks, “Satan as Archangel, before his fall, is never shown by Milton, but this stage

⁵ Lewis, p. 95.

⁶ Lewis, p. 97.

⁷ Lewis, p. 97.

of his existence is often alluded to.”⁸ I would suggest that the definitive moment is at the assembly before God’s throne in Book V. From Raphael’s account we are told that God, addressing all the angels in Heaven, declares that he has begotten his only Son, to whom “shall bow / All knees in Heav’n, and shall confess him Lord”(V 607-8). God then decrees that “him who disobeys / Mee disobeys, breaks union, and that day / [is] Cast out from God”(V, 611-13). We then learn that at these words, “All seem’d well pleas’d, all seem’d, *but were not all*”(V, 617, my italics), and at midnight, as all the angels sleep, “not so wak’d / Satan”(V, 657-8). Why is Satan, unlike all the other angels, displeased and sleepless on hearing God’s announcement? It is because thoughts are racing through his mind which has “resolv’d / With all his Legions to dislodge, and leave / Unworshipt, unobey’d, the Throne supreme”(V, 668-70). In *The Christian Doctrine*, Milton writes,

The personal sin of each individual is that which each in his own person has committed, independently of the sin which is common to all. Here likewise all men are guilty. Both kinds of sin . . . consist of the two following parts . . . namely, evil concupiscence, or the desire of sinning, and the act of sin itself . . . which is commonly called Actual sin. This may be incurred, not only by actions commonly so called, but also by words and thoughts, and even by the omission of good actions.⁹

Not just actions, but thoughts can constitute sin. Thus, as his thoughts stray from God’s command and darken as he formulates the idea of active resistance, Satan sins

⁸ Carey, p. 133.

⁹ John Milton, *The Christian Doctrine*, trans. Bishop Sumner, in *The Student’s Milton*, ed. F. Patterson, (New York: Appelton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1933) pp. 998-999.

and falls.¹⁰ Satan does not fall when he wages war against God and is cast from Heaven, but when he first thinks and approves of disobedience after God's appointment of Christ as Messiah.

The evidence of Satan's fallen state in Book V highlights an interesting feature of anti-Satanist criticism which can account for a good deal of the influence this position has had over the history of criticism on Satan. We have already seen that to view Satan in terms of unfallen being is valid, since he exists in Heaven. Yet the strong and abundant evidence of his extremely flawed nature increases his manifest inconsistency with this state. Not only does Satan display a concern with himself, but he also exhibits various violent and painful passions in Book V, in addition to imperfect reason which sends him into battle against omnipotence. What is more, Lewis himself, while saying on the one hand that Satan is "a native of Heaven," describes him alternatively as "diseased, perverted, twisted," and therefore clearly alien to Heaven. From these aspects of his character we can gather that Satan is quite unlike any of the other characters in Heaven, yet he occupies Heaven as if he *were* one of their company. This incongruity in the fiction, then, permits the anti-

¹⁰ The astute objection might be raised that quite the opposite is said by Adam after Satan's first attempt to beguile Eve:

Evil into the mind of God or Man
 May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave
 No spot or blame behind. (V, 117-19)

It would seem that thoughts of evil can be entertained and that there is nothing sinful in this. Yet, the critical word in these lines is "unapprov'd" which means that the involvement of the will is essential to the imputation of sin from such thoughts. "Milton . . . is saying that the presence of evil as an object of thought in the mind of God or man does not contaminate the mind, in that only the approval of the free will can bring about contamination" (*A Milton Encyclopedia*, ed. William Hunter, vol. 7, p. 87). As Eve did not approve of the evil Satan was proffering to her in Book V, she is not guilty of sin. However, Satan's disobedient thoughts were plainly of his own will, self-approved, thus resulting in sin.

Satanists to exploit the unfallen context in which Satan is shown to strengthen their contention that Satan is irrational.

An example of this occurs in Lewis' chapter on Satan in his *Preface* where he writes,

No one had in fact done anything to Satan; he was not hungry, nor over-tasked, nor removed from his place, nor shunned, nor hated — he only thought himself impaired. In the midst of a world of light and love, of song and feast and dance, he could find nothing to think of more interesting than his own prestige. (p. 96)

These are just a few instances, Lewis argues, of what eventually leads a total “doom of Nonsense”(p. 97) in Satan's mind. In Lewis' view, Satan is irrational for thinking these things when the glaring evidence around him is that life in Heaven is extremely good, and that there is not any reason to complain. Here Lewis is exploiting the unfallen context to argue that Satan is highly irrational. Attention must first be drawn to the words “thought” in the final phrase of the first sentence, and to “think of . . . his own prestige” in the second sentence. As argued in the previous chapter, for a being to be concerned with himself, to have a “thought” for his own well-being, and, furthermore, to be concerned about his own “prestige” in Heaven's hierarchy, the mind must be in a fallen state. What Satan is “thinking” can only be the thoughts of a fallen being, different from, and incomparable to everything heavenly. Yet the fiction allows that “reality” is the unfallen consciousness of Heaven, and as a consequence Lewis proceeds to judge Satan's “fallen” thoughts against the background of heavenly perfection, a comparative process which immediately makes Satan appear out of place, and extremely irrational. This incongruity in the narrative which suggests that

an extensively flawed being be viewed in relation to the state of unfallen being permits critics opposed to Satan to marshal strong yet cheap evidence of his irrationality.

In terms of the state of fallen being, however, Satan's mind is fundamentally different from those of the other unfallen characters. As we have already seen, Satan's fallen consciousness has altered to incorporate not just a concern with himself, but an excessive and hardened self-preoccupation. This is vividly described by Coleridge who writes,

Milton has carefully marked in his Satan the intense selfishness, the alcohol of egotism, which would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven. To place this lust of self in opposition to denial of self or duty, and to show what exertions it would make, and what pains endure to accomplish its end, is Milton's particular object in the character of Satan.¹¹

While this consciousness with self, or "egotism," is one symptom of Satan's fallen state, another is the fulfilment of ambitions deriving from himself, and not God. Unlike the good characters, Satan wills to attain personal aims which he has set himself so as to advance himself, such as gaining power by opposing God: "He trusted to have equall'd the most High, / If he oppos'd"(I, 40-1). His state of fallen being, then, defines and shapes Satan, and thus also dictates the terms in which he must be perceived. Satan and his reason must therefore be judged within the context of fallen being, in relation to his awareness of himself, and his personal aims and drives. Although we saw in the previous chapter a situation in which Satan's will overrules some dictates of his reason, there are throughout the poem other ways in

which Satan can be seen to be supremely rational. In relation to his fallen state and his fallen ambition to take power from God, Satan displays in his speech, thought, and action an ability to reason well so that while he may be irrational in relation to unfallen consciousness, he is, in relation to fallen consciousness, highly rational.

This is basically the view held by prominent Satanist critics, such as Waldock and Empson, but while asserting that Satan is highly rational, they fail to define the context in relation to which this is true. This not only makes their arguments weak and easy to refute, but also explains, I think, the comparative lack of standing their position has held in the critical tradition on Satan. Throughout their arguments, neither critic mentions that Satan is fallen, and that he must, therefore, be considered differently from all the other unfallen characters. And because this context is not clearly established, the arguments these critics put forward to justify successfully that Satan's bid for God's power is reasonable seem tenuous and strained. This is clearly evident when Waldock, referring to the poem and then to Satan's rebellion, argues that

some of the major difficulties that we now find in *Paradise Lost* are due, quite simply, to Milton's inexperience in the assessment of narrative problems . . . The truth surely is that Milton succeeded in suggesting a rather greater degree of provocation for it, and therefore of reasonableness in it, than he ever intended.¹²

Satan's revolt against God is reasonable because Milton made a mistake? A unique thesis, even if it is extremely unlikely. In similar fashion, Empson asserts that Satan is rational:

¹¹ Coleridge, p. 175.

If [the rebels] can fight against him for three days, that is enough to prove that he has not got absolute or metaphysical power; he is not the God of Aquinas; therefore he has been cheating them, and, however powerful he may be, to submit to him would be dishonourable.¹³

Empson looks to undermine God's moral character in an attempt to prove that Satan is reasonable. It is clear, then, that the failure on the part of these critics to firmly define the context in relation to which they perceive Satan means that their efforts to establish Satan's rationality are weak and unconvincing. However, by acknowledging that Satan is a fallen being, and viewing him in relation to this state of being, it can be argued persuasively that Satan is a highly rational agent.

Satan's rationality, given what he is, is evident first in his speeches, many of which critics judge to be irrational. As seen previously, Addison notes that "Amidst those Impieties which this Enraged Spirit utters in other places of the Poem, the Author has taken care to introduce none that is not big with absurdity."¹⁴ On this issue Johnson is like-minded: "There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience . . . his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked."¹⁵ This view of Satan is taken to its extreme by Lewis who sees a "doom of Nonsense"¹⁶ descending on the train of logic in Satan's early speeches. However, given that Satan is fallen and in some ways deluded, and that this determines the way in which he sees the world and God, it can be said that he is a rational being. This is

¹² Waldock, pp. 65 / 73-4.

¹³ Empson, p. 41.

¹⁴ Addison, p. 86, no. 303.

¹⁵ Johnson, p. 176.

first revealed in Satan's speech in Books I and II where he manipulates the democratic process of the infernal council. Through his speech, Satan craftily lays the initial stage of his plan to ruin Adam and Eve, manifesting as he proceeds the powerful and calculating reason of an exceptional human being.

This is evident first in his closing speech in Book I where he discretely introduces his plan to his troops as a very attractive course of action. From as early as Satan's first address to Beelzebub in Hell, the idea of employing guile to bring pressure to bear on God has been at the forefront of Satan's mind:

We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal War
Irreconcilable, to our grand Foe. (I, 120-22)

Up till now, force has been the only method of combat known to the troops of the rebel army. The war in Heaven was solely a clash of physical strength which did not involve employing much guile. The suggestion of a new style of combat, then, will come as a surprise to the rebels, and as with anything which differs from the norm, there is always the chance that it may be balked at and rejected. So, to avoid this and keep the proposal alive as a sound option, Satan must sell it well. He does this by casually mentioning the plan halfway through a speech which begins with a reaffirmation of the valour of the rebel angels. Satan grabs the attention of his listeners with the confidence-building words, "O Powers / Matchless, but with th'Almighty, and that strife / Was not inglorious"(I, 622-24), and seizes this opportunity to introduce his plan: "our better part remains / To work in close design,

¹⁶ Lewis, p. 97.

by fraud or guile”(I, 645-46). These lines are then immediately followed by a statement which reveals the enormous potential that guile holds for renewed combat with God:

..... that he no less
 At length from us may find, who overcomes
 By force, hath overcome but half his foe. (I, 647-49)

Satan implies that since force upset God’s heavenly peace and “shook his throne,”(I, 105) the same inroads can be made again with the other “half” of their arsenal, the equally powerful weapon of guile. Thus, Satan reveals strong reason by proffering his suggestion to the rebels and at the same time advertising it to them as a formidable weapon with great battle-winning potential.

His scheming is further evident in this speech as he shrewdly chooses his words to avoid betraying to the angels his commitment to his plan, a disclosure which might jeopardise its chances of being voted in by the council. Satan has given this plan much consideration before he gives an outline of it to the assembly. Learning from “a fame in Heav’n”(I, 651) that God has created a world “therein [to] plant / A generation”(I, 652-3), this, the seat of man, becomes the exact target at which his plan is directed. However, at the end of his summary, what Satan tells the troops is that “Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps / Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere”(I, 655-6). Satan’s analytical power is here at work, for by tossing in the word “elsewhere” at the end of the line, he appears to be non-specific about the destination; he gives the impression of being not yet quite certain where exactly they would have to head. By making it sound as if he has not yet had a chance to work through the details of his plan, Satan conveys the sense that it is still very much in the preliminary

stages and open to the counsel of the other angels. By portraying his plan as an idea fresh to his mind, and thereby further impressing it upon his troops without compromising its chances for approval in the debate, Satan displays a powerful and, at least in relation to his ambitions, rational intellect.

This is evident yet again in the tremendous influence he has over the agenda in the forthcoming infernal council. In spite of his decoy agenda of war inserted at the close of his final speech in Book I, Satan, conscious of the issue he really wants to appear before the council, masterfully words this speech to merge the issue of his plan with the agenda to be later discussed. Having explained to the troops the possibility of using guile as a means of continuing the war against God, Satan then puts it to them that “these thoughts / Full Counsel must mature”(I, 659-60). On the surface it appears that Satan welcomes the input of the other angels, and that their comments and criticisms will be respected so that the most satisfactory course of action can be found. This is in fact mere pretence. Satan is determined in his will to oppose God and is not the least interested in alternative views, but he cunningly gives the impression that he *is* because it will flatter them and aid in eventually winning them over to his cause. Underlying the seemingly unbiased forum of the council, then, is Satan’s firm will to oppose God by ruining man, a will, moreover, that can only be fulfilled by the direction of strong reason clearly manifested here in his shrewd use of speech. By preceding the idea of holding “Full Counsel” with the words “these thoughts,” Satan marries his plan with the concept of a debate. “These thoughts” precipitate the debate; “these thoughts” being Satan’s suggestion to attempt to beguile man: without this to discuss there would be no debate at all. In this large society in

Hell, any effort toward democratic procedure is welcomed, and thus the proposed debate is greeted with thunderous support:

He spake: and to confirm his words, out-flew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty Cherubim. (I, 663-5)

With this clever placement of words, Satan proposes a full meeting to discuss military deployment having already prescribed as its agenda the proposal to target man by means of guile. Moreover, Satan further promotes his plan by suggesting that it is the council's purpose not just to hear or to consider "these thoughts," but to "mature" them. To "mature" implies to improve, and in this context the improvement is to be done on what, like a bottle of reserve wine, is *already* good and in a state of completion. The understanding Satan is forming in the minds of the rebel angels, then, is that the intention of the debate is to refine what is already acceptable, to pay attention to the finer details of his plan. Thus, Satan's reason is clearly attested to by the clever positioning and selection of words in a speech which makes his plan the only important issue on the agenda of the infernal council.

Both Lewis and Fish fail to see this. In his *Preface*, Lewis vehemently argues that Satan's speech reveals that he is highly irrational. One example of Satan's contradictory logic is in his first address to the rebels from the throne of Pandemonium in Book II (l. 11-42). According to Lewis, Satan's logic here is that in Hell there is no good to be had so that the good of a sovereign will not be there to be envied by the subjects. Since this is their situation, they have a stability in Hell based on perfect misery, which Satan then holds out as a reason for striving for victory over

Heaven. Yet Satan, Lewis points out, “does not, apparently, notice that every approach to victory must take away the grounds on which victory is hoped”(p. 98).

Similar illogicalities and falsities are also observed by Fish:

Satan’s fallacies are wrapped in serpentine trains of false beginnings, faulty pronoun references, missing verbs and verbal schemes which sacrifice sense to sound (‘Surer to prosper than prosperity / Could have assur’d us’); it is a loose style, irresponsibly digressive, moving away steadily from logical coherence (despite the *appearance* of logic).¹⁷

In relation to unfallen consciousness, Satan’s logic may indeed be flawed. But given Satan’s fallen consciousness and the various delusions he suffers, this speech displays a kind of reason. Satan has an ambition to continue to oppose God, and in order to keep his broken troops faithful and committed to his cause, he must strengthen and reunite them. Thus, as Waldock notes, Satan in this important address intentionally sacrifices strict logical accuracy to a heightened emotional impact:

The whole aim of the speech, obviously, is to instil a mood, to cheer spirits, to confirm a confederacy that after the shocks it has just been receiving might easily be on the verge of total collapse. If this spurious impromptu reasoning accomplishes those immediate results it will have served the sole use it was meant for . . . The specious logic betrays, of course, the desperateness of the situation.¹⁸

What Lewis and Fish fail to appreciate is that behind the outward contradictions and inconsistencies is a greater and more sophisticated persuasive strategy which Satan pursues. So that rather than being misled by specious reasoning, Satan *uses* specious reasoning in order to address the pressures of the moment.

¹⁷ Fish, pp. 74 -75.

¹⁸ Waldock, p. 70.

Satan's powerful reason is also manifest throughout the entire proceedings of the infernal council in Book II. We first see this in his ability to manipulate the speeches of those who enter in the debate. However, in order to understand how Satan's influence extends this far, a brief digression is required. From the outset of the poem, Satan conspires with Beelzebub to aid in the advancement of his plan. In his opening speech in Hell, Satan refers to Beelzebub in his ruined and fallen state, which clearly reveals his collaboration in the Satanic rebellion:

..... If he whom mutual league,
 United thoughts and counsels, equal hope,
 And hazard in the Glorious Enterprise,
 Join'd with me once, now misery hath join'd
 In equal ruin: into what Pit thou seest
 From what heighth fall'n. (I, 87-92)

Note the adjectives — “mutual,” “united,” “equal,” “join'd” — which, “with me once,” stress a strong and exclusive confederacy between these two. Thus, Satan has an important ally in Beelzebub who continues to work closely with Satan to carry out his will to oppose God.

It is not hard to imagine, then, that Beelzebub's complicity in Satan's plan extends as far as the speeches he delivers. Being in league with Satan, Beelzebub at certain times directly expresses in his speeches what Satan wants him to say. No doubt about this is left at the end of Beelzebub's speech, which follows the three rebel angels' addresses:

..... Thus Beelzebub
 Pleaded his devilish Counsel, first devis'd
 By Satan, and in part propos'd: for whence,
 But from the Author of all ill could spring
 So deep a malice. (II, 378-82)

The speech which Beelzebub has just delivered is not his heartfelt, independent perspective on the matter before council; its content was instead “first devis’d / By Satan, and in part propos’d.” Even if Satan spelled out only a portion of it word for word to Beelzebub, that is, “in part propos’d” it, its intellectual source is in Satan who “first devis’d” it. In this speech, then, Beelzebub is performing a function he is assigned. Moreover, the manner in which Beelzebub delivers the introduction of his speech further betrays Satan’s influence. Compare Beelzebub’s opening lines, “Thrones and imperial Powers, offspring of heav’n / Ethereal Virtues”(II, 310-11), with Satan’s at the beginning of Book II, “Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heav’n”(II, 11) and in Book I, “Princes, Potentates, / Warriors, the Flow’r of Heav’n”(I, 315-16). In these lines, Beelzebub imitates not only Satan’s use of a formal salutation to the gathered angels, and the inclusion of hierarchical titles in the salutation, but also Satan’s style of presenting the titles in list form. The presence of Satan permeates every aspect of Beelzebub’s speech. In certain instances, therefore, Satan chooses to use Beelzebub’s speech as a medium through which he promotes his plan. On these occasions, Beelzebub’s speeches, in as much as they serve as a proxy for Satan’s speeches, *are* Satan’s speeches.

Let us, then, pick up Satan’s calculated corruption of the council where we left off. He continues to promote his plan during the actual debate of the council in Book II. We see this “patient cunning,”¹⁹ as Shelley puts it, in Satan’s opening speech where he exploits his authority as chief of the rebel angels to weaken the arguments of the first three speakers. Satan does this by working to his advantage the morally

opposite qualities of Heaven and Hell. From the throne of Pandemonium, Satan appears to set store on the positive qualities Hell possesses by assuring his troops that they will recover from their defeat in war and “will appear / More glorious”(II, 15-16). Unlike Heaven, the sovereignty of Hell is, according to Satan, “Establisht in a safe unenvied Throne / Yielded with full consent”(II, 23-24), and since, here, “no strife can grow up / . . . From Faction”(II, 31-32), society in Hell has the “advantage then / To union, and firm Faith, and firm accord, / More than can be in Heav’n”(II, 35-37). All things heavenly, therefore, are deemed valueless, and any aspirations the rebels may have had to Heaven are deflated as the kingdom of Hell is presented as the only ground for living. The influence of Satan’s positive portrayal of Hell can be first seen in the suggestions Belial puts forward. In his view, life in Hell will improve, so it is “Worth waiting, since our present lot appears / For happy though but ill, for ill not worst”(II, 223-4). Similarly, Mammon urges that

. prosperous of adverse
 We can create, and in what place soe’er
 Thrive under evil, and work ease out of pain
 Through labour and endurance. (II, 259-262)

And even Moloch, having suggested a suicidal-type war effort only as a means to alleviate their torment, concludes that in the worst possible case life can get no worse for them in Hell, and that they can turn their energies to continuing their siege of Heaven:

. we are at worst

¹⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 46.

On this side nothing; and by proof we feel
 Our power sufficient to disturb his Heav'n,
 And with perpetual inroads to Alarm,

 Which if not Victory is yet Revenge. (II, 100-3 / 105)

These three speeches, then, bear the stamp of their chief. The message in all of them is that for we who have been damned, something good can be made of Hell. Having initially described Hell in positive terms, and having therefore induced the rebels to think of it in the same way, Satan then reverses his position, asserting instead that *Heaven* is the only true measure of virtue and good. Through the words of Beelzebub, acting as Satan's mouthpiece, Satan declares that the honours of Heaven have an integrity and prestige far exceeding anything Hell can offer:

Thrones and imperial Powers, offspring of heav'n,
 Ethereal Virtues; or these Titles now
 Must we renounce, and changing style be call'd
 Princes of Hell? (II, 310-13)

Satan is saying that, in reality, Hell can give them nothing compared to Heaven. To be "Princes of Hell" pales beside the heavenly title of "imperial Powers." By a manipulative ploy, Satan has lulled his opposing speakers into forming arguments grounded in the understanding that Hell has value. Satan then summarily proves these grounds valueless by citing stronger, contrary evidence, based on Heaven's virtue. Though he contradicts himself, he does so primarily in order to discredit others' suggestions and to promote his own plan.

The final act in sabotaging the democratic procedure of the council, which further reveals Satan's strength of reason, is ensuring that a favourable outcome is

obtained. Satan deftly achieves this by again having Beelzebub act on his behalf. In his speech which follows the three rebel addresses, Beelzebub first steers the voting process to a dead end, and then reiterates Satan's plan in the thick of this dilemma, gaining a unanimous vote for it. During the council, Satan's suggestion of "covert guile"(II, 41) offered at the beginning of Book II is gradually replaced by those of military war and peace which are the two issues dominating the arguments of Moloch, Belial, and Mammon. Of these two options peace is greatly preferred to dreaded battle:

. . . . Mammon ended, and his Sentence pleas'd,
 Advising peace: for such another Field
 They dreaded worse than Hell: so much the fear
 Of Thunder and the Sword of Michael
 Wrought still within them. (II, 291-95)

This, then, is the popular mood at the close of these three addresses, and the climate in which Satan will complete his manipulative work. Beelzebub now enters the debate and flies in the face of popular sentiment by stressing the necessity of war, and the futility of peace:

What sit we then projecting Peace and War?
 War hath determin'd us, and foil'd with loss
 Irreparable; terms of peace yet none
 Vouchsaf't or sought; for what peace will be giv'n
 To us enslav'd, but custody severe,
 And stripes, and arbitrary punishment
 Inflicted? (II, 329-35)

Open military engagement is loathed, yet the council is calling at its close for the support of a course of action that almost all do not want. Satan, working through Beelzebub, thus presents the rebel angels at the moment of truth with an impossible voting task. This bind, however, creates the perfect situation in which to steer the outcome of the debate, and relief comes in the form of Beelzebub's remark, "What if we find / Some easier enterprise?"(II, 344-45). From amidst the argumentative mire, a third option is found, an "easier" one, the option to attack "the happy seat / Of some new Race call'd Man"(II, 347-48). Since peace is impossible, how attractive this alternative seems to the rebels, an alternative which avoids the dreaded consequences of military contact. "With full assent / They vote"(II, 388-89) to support Satan's proposal to beguile man. Through Beelzebub, then, Satan cleverly leads the debate to an apparent jam, and then, by introducing what appears to be an unforeseen third option, provides immediate resolution to the problem facing the council. Thus, Satan extensively manipulates the proceedings of the debate to ensure unanimous consent to his plan.

Because Satan, like ourselves, is a fallen being, he has ambitions he wishes to fulfil which derive from himself and not God. One such aim is to oppose God by ruining Adam and Eve, the first phase of which is to gain the backing of his rebel army. Satan achieves this brilliantly by initiating a council forum which he manipulates by using the coercive power of speech. Given, then, what Satan is and what he wants, the success with which he steers the process of debating and voting to a beneficial outcome, while all the time avoiding the scrutiny of his peers, establishes him as supremely rational.

Just as Satan proceeds rationally in his speech, so, too, does he think through his situation in a rational manner. This is evident especially in his soliloquies. First, Satan's rationality is attested to by the astute inferences he draws from fundamental recognitions and truths he identifies about himself and his God. Secondly, his reasonableness is revealed in his ability not only to contain outbursts of passion, but also to deduce in an ordered and logical fashion.

We first see how reasonable Satan is in his sun soliloquy early in Book IV. From fundamental recognitions he makes here about himself and God, he rightly infers that there will always be enmity between them. Midway through this soliloquy, Satan entertains the thought of abandoning his evil and turning back to God: "O then at last relent: is there no place / Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?"(IV, 79-80). However, Satan then proceeds to balance the possibility of repentance with certain fundamental truths he first identifies about himself. Even in the event of God's "Act of Grace"(IV, 94), Satan recognises that regaining his former "height"(IV, 95) would merely "recall high thoughts"(IV, 95) which, in addition to his "wounds of deadly hate"(IV, 99), would "soon unsay / What feign'd submission swore"(IV, 95-6) and further lead, he quickly infers, "to a worse relapse, / And heavier fall"(IV, 100-1). Moreover, Satan also recognises that God will never forgive him, and infers from this that any hope of peace or reconciliation between them is futile:

This knows my punisher; therefore as far
From granting hee, as I from begging peace:
All hope excluded thus. (IV, 103-5)

Thus, his decision at the soliloquy's close to "farewell Hope"(IV, 108) and continue to oppose God (IV, 109-13), despite his earlier defeat, is not evidence of extreme irrationality but is rather a sound and reasoned option given his desperate and irrevocable situation. Satan's ability to infer from fundamental recognitions and truths about himself and his God testifies to his sound reason.

Satan's reasonableness is also revealed in his ability to contain his passion. The narrator's description of Adam and Eve when in a state of passion in Book IX, helps us ascertain the important function performed by reason and will:

Their inward State of Mind, calm Region once
 And full of Peace, now tost and turbulent:
 For Understanding rul'd not, and the Will
 Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
 To sensual Appetite, who from beneath
 Usurping over sovran Reason claim'd
 Superior sway. (IX, 1125-31)

When passion transports the mind, reason and will are "both in subjection now / To sensual Appetite." These passions can only be controlled once "sovrän Reason" makes itself heard above the tumult of passion in one's mind. Only when this occurs is the will able to respond to the prompts of reason and curb the irrational and distracting passion, restoring calm and order to the mind. Without the direction of reason in the first instance, the will, having "Heard not her lore," would remain servile to passion and unable to obey reason. It is reason which is the essential factor in the containment of passion.

This is evident first in Satan's "O Hell" soliloquy in Book IV. Perched like a cormorant on the Tree of Life, Satan catches sight for the first time of Adam and Eve, and is overwhelmed with passion, out of which he exclaims,

O Hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold,
 Into our room of bliss thus high advanc't
 Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,
 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. (IV, 358-64)

Gazing at the beauty and happiness of the earthly pair, Satan is consumed by "Grief," "bliss," "wonder," and "love." In a moment of distraction, Satan's passions have welled up and overcome his reason, for as the archangel Michael tells Adam in Book XII,

Reason in man obscur'd, or not obey'd,
 Immediately inordinate desires
 And upstart Passions catch the Government
 From Reason. (XII, 86-9)

However, these passions have only a short reign in Satan's mind, for in the next line Satan's reason reasserts itself and stems the outpouring of emotion:

Ah gentle pair, yee little think how nigh
 Your change approaches, when all these delights
 Will vanish and deliver ye to woe. (IV, 366-68)

Thoughts of love and wonder which endeared Adam and Eve to Satan have been replaced by thoughts concerned with reversing their present "delights" and delivering

them “to woe.” The fit of passion at the soliloquy’s start is quickly checked by the intervention of Satan’s intellect which focuses his thoughts back onto the important matter of his plan to effect Adam and Eve’s fall from innocence. It is Satan’s reason which quells the flights of passion to which Satan is sometimes prone.

Satan’s next soliloquy in Book IV provides an even clearer instance of his ability to contain his passion. After having lurked in the twilight outside Adam and Eve’s bower watching the pair share gestures of affection, Satan overflows with emotion:

Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two
 Imparadis’t in one another’s arms
 The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
 Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust,
 Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
 Among our other torments not the least,
 Still unfulfill’d with pain of longing pines. (IV, 505-11)

Feelings “hateful” and “tormenting” grip his mind while jealousy of Adam and Eve’s “bliss,” “joy,” and “love” fuels in him sharp “pain” and “longing.” The sight of the pair embracing fills Satan with many strong passions. Yet, just as in the previous soliloquy where Satan’s thoughts are not entirely lost to this flight of passion, so here his reason controls the welter of emotion to restore order and purpose to his thought. These first seven lines, which express so great a degree of emotion, are replaced by thoughts displaying a completely different frame of mind. The next lines read, “Yet let me not forget what I have gain’d / From their own mouths; all is not theirs it seems”(IV, 512-13). The contrast is enormous between the state of mind revealed in these two sections of the soliloquy. The strong passion of the opening section gives

way to calm assessment of the knowledge “gain’d” from Adam and Eve which will advance Satan’s plan. It is as though Satan is gripped by passion and then, in the momentary pause between lines, his reason intervenes, saying, “Satan, stop this, pull yourself together and get on with the job!” Certainly, there is still a presence of passion, such as malice and hate, in his thought after this point, but it is subordinate to Satan’s calculated plan. In this soliloquy, Satan’s reason snaps into play, and after restraining the wayward passions concentrates his thoughts back onto the central issue of how best to beguile Adam and Eve. Given, then, that Satan is a fallen being with independent ambitions to fulfil, and given that reason is the faculty that allows one to contain passion, the containment of this distracting and unproductive passion testifies to his strong rationality.

This is further evident in the process of methodical and ordered deduction also manifested in this soliloquy. A moment earlier in Book IV, Satan overhears a conversation between Adam and Eve, in which Adam warns Eve of the sanctity of the Tree of Knowledge, the sole condition of their happy state: “God hath pronounc’t it death to taste that Tree, / The only sign of our obedience left”(IV, 427-8). In Satan’s soliloquy which follows, he sets his mind to thinking about what he has heard:

..... all is not theirs it seems:
 One fatal Tree there stands of Knowledge call’d,
 Forbidden them to taste: Knowledge forbidd’n?
 Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord
 Envy them that? can it be sin to know,
 Can it be death? and do they only stand
 By Ignorance, is that their happy state,
 The proof of their obedience and their faith?
 (IV, 513-20)

Notice first the numerous questions Satan puts to himself in an effort to aid his understanding of the facts to which he has just been privy: “Knowledge forbidd’n?”; “Why should their Lord / Envy them that?”; “can it be sin to know, / Can it be death?”(IV, 515 / 516-7 / 517-8). A second way in which he methodically reasons is by looking at the facts from a different angle to help clarify them better. If by “Knowledge forbidden” they remain in their blissful state, then it can also be said that this bliss is assured “By Ignorance.” Satan substitutes “Knowledge” for its opposite, “Ignorance,” to shed fresh light on the matter. He then concludes that this is the essence of “their happy state,” and therefore the key factor in the implementation of their downfall: “O fair foundation laid whereupon to build / Their ruin!”(IV, 521-2). In this passage, then, we see mental activity which is different from some of the chaotic and emotionally-distracted thought also manifested by his soliloquies. In the same way as casual and spontaneous chat between friends differs from the ordered, deliberate, and methodical nature of argumentation, so do the irrationally impassioned flights of the mind differ from the strict operations of elimination, deduction, and calculation present in reasoning. Because Satan displays in his thought the ability not just to deduce logically and to infer astutely, but also to contain his passion, he can further be seen as a reasonable being.

Given that he is a fallen being who is waging war against God, his actions, like his speech and thought, also reveal that he is highly rational. To maintain the steady advancement of his will to ruin Adam and Eve, Satan must perform the dangerous task not only of reconnoitring, and of gathering intelligence from situations where there is the imminent possibility of detection, but also of accurately dissembling for a

considerable period of time. The art of disguise, then, is invaluable in these situations, and one which, as we are told in Book VI, is readily available to beings of spiritual form:

All Heart they live, all Head, all Eye, all Ear,
 All Intellect, all Sense, and as they please,
 They Limb themselves, and colour, shape or size
 Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare. (VI, 350-53)

By looking at the specific ways in which Satan practises this art of disguise, we can see the reason in his methods.

The first bestial disguise Satan adopts occurs early in Book IV where he takes on the appearance of a cormorant to get a broad view of the surrounding terrain of Paradise. The descent from Mt. Niphates brings Satan into some densely vegetated country at the outskirts of Eden: “a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides / With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild, / Access deni’d”(IV, 135-37). Gaining entry to Paradise at last by shinnying over a gate, Satan now finds himself hedged about by the thick bush that barred his approach: “so thick entwinn’d, / As one continu’d brake, the undergrowth / Of shrubs and tangling bushes”(IV, 174-76). Hemmed in on all sides by plant life, Satan cannot see what awaits him in any direction. To familiarise himself with the landscape, and to prepare the next phase of his plan, Satan must find a good vantage point from which to survey the area. He does this by using what natural features there are in his environment:

Thence up he flew, and on the Tree of Life,
 The middle Tree and the highest there that grew,
 Sat like a Cormorant. (IV, 194-96)

Satan makes for the tree “the highest there that grew” to gain the best outlook over Paradise. However, to occupy safely this prominent lookout, Satan must disguise himself appropriately. An angel aloft a tree would seem very out of place. To appear natural when positioned in the uppermost branches of the tree, and not to arouse the suspicions of Adam and Eve should they happen to look up, Satan must opt for the appearance of an animal which habitually perches in high and exposed places. The cormorant colony in Christchurch’s Botanical Gardens can be observed perching sedately on the top branches of a very tall pine tree whose sparsely leaved limbs would afford the best views of the surrounding gardens.²⁰ Thus, on finding his vision in Paradise almost totally restricted by vegetation, Satan cleverly disguises himself as a cormorant not only to gain the best view of the area, but also to seem most natural in such an exposed and precarious place.

When Satan disguises himself as a lion and a tiger further on in Book IV, he does so to acquire important information from Adam and Eve. The panoramic view from the top of the Tree of Life has greatly increased Satan’s knowledge by revealing to him the lie of the land, the location of the human pair, and the many wild animals that roam the plains. This is all valuable knowledge, but too general, not the specialised kind needed for the formulation of a strategy for tempting man. To learn more about his subjects — their intellect, their desires — he must observe them very closely, and gain specific information first-hand as they go about their daily activities.

²⁰ I have noticed cormorants perched in tall trees not just in the Christchurch Botanical Gardens, but in many different places. At Lake Taupo, they frequently perch on high, isolated rocks and overhanging branches.

None of this is possible from the vantage point of the tree, nor would it be possible for Satan, in his true shape, to sneak close enough to Adam and Eve to listen to them talking whilst also avoiding detection. To position himself safely at this distance, Satan disguises himself as a big cat: “about them round / A Lion now he stalks with fiery glare, / Then as a Tiger”(IV, 401-03). Just as a cat can draw close to its prey and remain concealed for lengths of time, so Satan “Straight couches close, then rising changes oft / His couchant watch”(IV, 405-6) so as to listen to his subjects nearby and undetected. Satan gathers information from Adam and Eve from close proximity by disguising himself as a big cat whose instinctive traits of stealth and patience are invaluable for the task of spying.

Satan’s toad disguise also moves out of an astute and critical mind. On the matter of Satan’s disguises Carey notes, “Satan’s bestial disguises need not be regarded as debasement or degradation, as some critics have viewed them, since he retains his inner consciousness despite his disguises.”²¹ While Carey is right to refute this view on grounds of Satan’s consciousness, Satan’s calculating reason is also a very significant factor, since there is a rational base to each disguise. Having listened at close range to Adam and Eve’s conversation, Satan intends, at the end of Book IV, to utilise this knowledge in an attempt to beguile Eve. Satan, however, must take into consideration the particular circumstances involved in this attempt. First, since he intends to beguile Eve when she is asleep, she will consequently be lying on or close to the ground on “her Nuptial Bed”(IV, 710) in her bower. She must also not be awakened from this state, since it is the world of her dreams which Satan is targeting with his guile. It is of capital importance, then, that Satan position himself low to the

ground and close to the ear of sleeping Eve so that he need not talk too loud, but instead can speak very quietly, “With gentle voice”(V, 37). The susurrations of a gentle and almost whispering voice will have sufficient volume to convey audibly his words while also soothing and lulling her, thus ensuring the continuation of her sleep. To assume comfortably a position so close to the ground, the toad presents itself to Satan as a perfect disguise. It is no coincidence, then, that the angelic search party should discover Satan at Eve’s ear disguised as a toad:

..... 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. (IV, 799-803)

Not only is the toad by nature a ground dweller, but its habitual squat-like crouch also means that it is always ready to leap away at the first sign of danger. Thus, Satan’s act of disguising himself as a toad is another example of action that, given what Satan wants to achieve, is thoroughly rational.

The extent to which Satan’s reason controls his bestial disguises is seen most vividly in his decision to disguise himself as a serpent. Satan does this so as not to alarm Eve with the explicitly human actions the serpent performs at the beginning of the temptation. Like the other animals Satan has disguised himself as, the serpent also possesses distinctive characteristics. The serpent has the reputation of being the “subtlest Beast of all the Field”(IX, 86) and the “fittest Imp of fraud”(IX, 89). Its cunning and deceitful practices are considered natural:

²¹ Carey, p. 133.

..... for in the wily Snake,
 Whatever sleights none would suspicious mark,
 As from wit and native subtlety
 Proceeding. (IX, 91-4)

Because the serpent is naturally wily and subtle, one would not blink an eyelid at any apparent “sleights” it might accomplish. It is the serpent’s renown, then, which Satan exploits to fulfil his plan. In order sufficiently to manipulate Eve, Satan requires the serpent to perform specific actions which are beyond the normal capability of animals. No animal is better qualified than the serpent to carry off, in the very face of Eve, these human actions, without their abnormality raising suspicion in her mind. As the serpent makes its first approach to Eve, it floats, curls, bows, fawns, licks, and turns (IX, 494-531). On their own these actions are unremarkable. A snake constantly curls, licks, and turns. Yet when these actions occur together, as “a surging Maze”(IX, 499) with the serpent’s “Head / Crested aloft”(IX, 499-500), they form the choreography of an elaborate and seductive belly dance:

..... the Enemy of Mankind, enclos’d
 In Serpent
 Address’d his way, not with indented wave,
 Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
 Circular base of rising folds, that tow’r’d
 Fold above fold. (IX, 494-5 / 496-99)

More abnormal than a dancing snake, however, is one that speaks: “with Serpent Tongue / Organic . . . / His fraudulent temptation thus began”(IX, 529-30 / 31). To dance in an erotic manner, and, especially, to talk in human language, are actions which transcend the normal capability of animals. However, since the serpent is

known as the most cunning and subtle beast, when it performs these completely unanimal-like actions they seem only natural to Eve and least likely to arouse her suspicions. Thus, Satan brilliantly disguises himself as a serpent to tempt Eve most effectively.

While Satan is in some respects profoundly deluded and irrational, then, in other respects he is supremely rational. The particular ways in which he is rational become clear once we observe that Satan is, like us, fallen, and that he is in fact acting on some mistaken assumption about the world and God. Given his fallen state of being and his fallen ambition to oppose God by ruining mankind, Satan is supremely rational in his speech, though, and action. Through the masterful use of coercive speech, Satan manipulates in calculated and Machiavellian style the entire debating process of the infernal council, gaining at its close a favourable vote and also reaching an important milestone in the progress of his plan. His thought manifested especially by his soliloquies further testifies to his strong rationality. First, Satan infers reasonably from fundamental facts and recognitions he has about himself and God that an attempt at reconciliation and peace between himself and God is futile. His reasonableness is also revealed in his ability not only to contain his passion, but to deduce in an ordered and logical fashion. Satan's reason also plays a central role in his acts of disguise by determining which animal-like appearance he should assume to profit best from the situation. It is in part, then, because of his capacity to reason powerfully and rigorously that Satan resembles an exceptional and talented human being. Yet while reason is a dominant attribute of his character, it is by no means the only one. In addition to his consciousness, will, and reason, it is Satan's passion

which rounds off his exceptional humanity and will therefore be considered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Satan's Passion

In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Hugh Blair writes that “Had [Milton] taken a subject that was more human, and less theological; that was more connected with the occurrences of life; and afforded a greater display of the characters and passions of men, his Poem would, perhaps, have, to the bulk of Readers, been more pleasing and attractive.”¹ A valid criticism of the poem’s subject in general. Nonetheless, the one character who meets all these criteria, and who thereby explains to some extent why so many readers have found the poem pleasing and attractive is Satan. It is in part because Satan is essentially human that *Paradise Lost* interests us. As we have seen, Satan’s consciousness, will, and reason all play a part in making him appear to us as a human figure who is therefore in an essential sense like ourselves. Passion is the final aspect of this humanity. Though Blair fails to see this aspect of Satan, Dennis does not. Speaking of Satan and the rebel angels he notes that “The Passions of *Milton’s* Devils have enough of Humanity in them to make them delightful, but then they have a great deal more to make them admirable and may be said to be the true Passions of Devils.”² In Dennis’ view, the passions of Satan and the rebel angels afford them a human quality. Building on this observation, this chapter will argue first that Satan’s full, variegated, and conflicting passionate life establishes him as a character in the poem who is essentially like us. It will also argue

¹ Blair, p. 542.

that Satan is driven by his tremendous passion, and that this drive is another of the strengths of his character which make him like an exceptional human being.

Before this first part is demonstrated, however, a moment must be spent responding to a possible counter argument. One challenge that may be raised is this. Thorough analysis of the poem reveals that God, Abdiel, and the other unfallen angels also display passion, yet they certainly could not be called human characters. If the passions these characters display do not make them “human,” why, then, should they in the case of Satan? Outwardly, the logic of this observation appears sound. However, a more subtle reading of the passions of the characters in the poem exposes the weakness of this objection. The critical factor to be noticed, which distinguishes the characters of God and the good angels from that of Satan, is that the passions displayed by the former characters are very limited in number.

Only a couple of passions distort the otherwise blank countenance of God. First, his anger is evident when, for example, he responds to the imminent threat of military engagement with Satan and his troops. Following God’s instructions to Michael to “drive them out from God and bliss, / Into their place of punishment, the Gulf / Of Tartarus”(VI, 52-4) the

..... Clouds began
 To darken all the Hill, and smoke to roll
 In dusky wreaths, reluctant flames, the sign
 Of wrath awak’t. (VI, 56-9)

² Dennis, p. 116.

Joy is also felt by God. In his reply to God, who has just prophesied man's fall from grace, Christ assures God that once everything is set right, the latter's wrath will be replaced by joy:

Then with the multitude of my redeem'd
 Shall enter Heaven long absent, and return,
 Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud
 Of anger shall remain
 wrath shall be no more
 Thenceforth, but in thy presence Joy entire. (III, 260-5)

The good angels, who normally “meet / So oft in Festivals of joy and love / Unanimous”(VI, 93-5) also display, on occasions, slight variations of passion. In Book V, Abdiel expresses anger. Incensed by Satan's speech, which is designed to enlist the angels to his cause, Abdiel loads his strong rebuke with “The current of his fury”(V, 808). Similarly, Zephon and Gabriel's contact with Satan raises strong emotions in them. After discovering Satan in his toad disguise, Zephon matches each insult flung at him by Satan, “answering scorn with scorn”(IV, 834). Likewise, the taunts and lies Satan provides to Gabriel's questions provoke in him contempt, mixed with disbelieving astonishment: “Disdainfully half smiling [he] thus repli'd”(IV, 903). While passion is very much present in all these characters, the anger, joy, love, and disdain they collectively display represent only a handful of passions in relation to the extensively varied emotional composition of human beings. God and the unfallen angels are, as Hamilton says, “remote and strange”³ in part because their range of passion is so limited. Unlike them, Satan displays a full and extensive array of

³ Hamilton, p. 39.

passions which have varying degrees of intensity and which often strongly conflict with one another.

First of all, bad, violent, and painful passions constitute a portion of Satan's rich and varied emotional character. Many of these are evident as Satan wakes from his trance in Hell:

..... But his doom
 Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought
 Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
 Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes
 That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
 Mixt with obdurate pride and steadfast hate.
 (I, 53-8)

In addition to pride and hatred, the passions of envy, malice, and disdain are ones which Satan experiences earlier on an occasion which is described later in the poem: while still in Heaven, Satan was:

..... great in Power,
 In favour and preeminence, yet fraught
 With envy against the Son of God, that day
 Honour'd by his great Father, and proclaim'd
 Messiah King anointed, could not bear
 Through pride that sight, and thought himself impair'd.
 Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain.
 (V, 660-6)

Thus, an important feature of Satan's emotional character is its extensive array of violent and painful passion. Given that such passions are commonplace in humans, they also must feature in the characters of literary figures wishing to achieve a human likeness. It is in part because these passions constitute a healthy proportion of those Satan displays that he seems human, all too human.

This likeness is further enhanced by several other passions, such as guilt and remorse, which are also commonly felt by human beings. On earth in Book IV, the unrelenting hatred and malice Satan feels towards God is momentarily broken. As Addison notes,

Satan being now within Prospect of *Eden*, and looking round upon the Glories of the Creation, is filled with Sentiments different from those which he discovered whilst he was in Hell. The Place inspires him with Thoughts more adapted to it: He reflects upon the happy Condition from whence he fell, and breaks forth into a Speech that is softened with several transient Touches of Remorse and Self-accusation.⁴

In his soliloquy on Mt Niphates' top, then, Satan first expresses guilt towards his God whom he here feels he wronged:

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, 42-5)

A moment later, Satan is seized by frustrated regret at his earlier actions which lost him Heaven: "Nay curs'd be thou; since against his thy will / Chose freely what it now so justly rues"(IV, 71-2). However, this attitude softens, and midway through the soliloquy, Satan toys with contrition and reconciliation with God: "O then at last relent: is there no place / Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?"(IV, 79-80). In contrast to the violent passion of hatred, we here see Satan experiencing a degree of guilt, sadness, and remorse. Considering the extensive representation of passion in Satan, then, Johnson is wrong when he observes that "As human passions did not enter the world before the Fall, there is in the "Paradise Lost" little opportunity for the

pathetick.”⁵ Human passion is fully and vividly realised in Satan, and “the magnificence of his pathos,”⁶ as Bloom puts it, is central to our interest in the poem.

And like us, Satan is also afraid on occasions, even though, as many critics have argued, he is brave and courageous figure. Waldock, for example, describes Satan as possessing “fortitude in adversity, enormous endurance, a certain splendid recklessness, remarkable powers of rising to an occasion, extraordinary qualities of leadership.”⁷ It can indeed be said that Satan is brave and courageous, but this courage accommodates the fear that he experiences, for example, as he stands on the threshold of the open universe, having just had Sin open the gates of Hell. From Satan’s position he witnesses

The Womb of nature and perhaps her Grave,
Of neither Sea, nor Shore, nor Air, nor Fire,
But all these in their pregnant causes mixt
Confus’dly, and which thus must ever fight. (II, 911-4)

The vista before him is terrifying: powerful elements in loud and ceaseless collision with no prospect of calm. Compared to this, the vitreous precincts of Hell must have seemed a tranquil haven, and on account of the tumultuous sight before him,

Into this wild Abyss the wary fiend
Stood on the brink of Hell and look’d a while,
Pondering his Voyage; for no narrow frith
He had to cross. Nor was his ear less peal’d
With noises loud and ruinous.(II, 917-21)

⁴ Addison, p. 171, no. 321.

⁵ Johnson, p. 183.

⁶ Bloom, p. 99.

⁷ Waldock, p. 77.

On the verge of this vast tract of confusion, Satan is described as being “wary.” Cautious here of proceeding, Satan hesitates and considers his progress: “[he] look’d a while, / Pondering his Voyage.” This hesitation can be compared to the conviction and decisiveness of action he displays in the very next stage of his journey: “Eagerly the Fiend” enters the wild realm of Chaos, then draws near its king, “Sable-vested Night”(II, 962), “T’whom Satan turning boldly, thus”(II, 968) requests assistance in his quest. Why, then, is Satan initially so wary and tentative? On the brink of “this wild Abyss,” he experiences something approaching fear for both his physical well-being and the continuation of his mission. What is more, as Satan watches, his hearing, one of the key senses in the mechanism of self-preservation, is keenly attuned to every sound around him: “Nor was his ear less peal’d / With noises loud and ruinous.” Satan’s reactions — his hesitation, his highly attuned ears — on seeing the gut-wrenching turmoil extending beyond him intimate something of a stirring of inner fear. This feeling is manifested again in Satan’s first soliloquy in Book IX. In reference to the vigilance with which the good angels keep watch over Adam and Eve, Satan says to himself:

..... Angel wings,
 And flaming Ministers to watch and tend
 Their earthly Charge: Of these the vigilance
 I dread. (IX, 155-8)

When in Eden, Satan experiences constant “dread” at the prospect of being discovered by the sharp eyesight of these guardian angels. Thus, while it can certainly be said that Satan displays conviction and boldness during his journey, these qualities are

balanced by occasional instances of an emotion which approaches fear. Because of this very human feeling, we further recognise him as being like ourselves.

Satan also experiences tender and kind emotions, a point noted by Macaulay in the comparison he draws between Prometheus and Satan: "Prometheus bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings."⁸ The first of these "kind," or tender emotions is the grief Satan feels on looking at Adam and Eve in Paradise. From his elevated position on the Tree of Life in Book IV, Satan surveys the landscape, the birds and animals, and also the forms of Adam and Eve. Witnessing them for the first time, Satan is overawed by the majesty and elegance of the beings he is set to destroy:

O Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold,
 Into our room of bliss thus high advanc't
 Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,
 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 their shape hath pour'd.
 (IV, 358-65)

Catching sight of his quarry does not stir up in him the nervous excitement of a hunter, nor does he delight at the challenge of the chase soon to come. Instead, Satan grieves at what he knows must soon befall Adam and Eve, whom also, we gather, he "could love." Thus, not only does Satan express "grief" towards the human pair, but

⁸ Macaulay, p. 27.

their “Divine resemblance” also awakens in him at least the inclination to a second tender passion: love. In addition to these gentle and affectionate emotions, compassion is also displayed at the end of this soliloquy when Satan, thinking about the future of Adam and Eve, says,

And should I at your harmless innocence
Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,
Honour 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, 388-89).

With the verb “melt,” the deep and unrestrained pity Satan feels for the human pair is vividly revealed. All passions of violence and hatred give way at this point to “magnanimous compassion,”⁹ as Carey puts it, and it will only be by the strongest act of will, by upholding “public reason,” that Satan can bring himself “To do what else though damn’d I should abhor.” Satan is capable of feeling the tender emotions of grief, love, and compassion, and thus clearly experiences far more than just the “pride, malice, folly, misery, and lust,”¹⁰ which, for Lewis, exhaust his emotional range.

Satan also feels embarrassment. This is most clearly revealed when viewed against the background of Satan’s usually confident disposition, which is evident, for example, as he fills his lungs to deliver his second uplifting speech to the rebel army, and stands amidst their number like a pillar of strength:

. he above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a Tow’r; his form had yet not lost
All her Original brightness, nor appear’d
Less than Arch Angel ruin’d and th’ excess
Of Glory obscured. (I, 589-94)

⁹ Carey, p. 138.

¹⁰ Lewis, p. 101.

This confidence can be seen again during Satan's approach toward the gates of Hell, which introduces him to the figure of Death, whose looming bulk "black . . . stood as Night, / Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell"(II, 670-1). Yet, even with this monstrous, foreign form bearing down on him, "Th'undaunted Fiend what this might be admir'd, / Admir'd, not fear'd"(II, 677-8). Although he is afraid at some moments, here he stands his ground in the face of his oncoming foe. This confidence momentarily falters, however, in his encounter with Ithuriel and Zephon in Eden at the end of Book IV. Having been discovered at the ear of Eve, Satan, asked to identify himself, answers insultingly (IV, 827-33). In turn, Zephon humbles Satan with unrestrained personal remarks about his appearance:

Think not, revolted Spirit, thy shape the same,
Or undiminish'd brightness, to be known
..... thou resembl'st now
Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul.
(IV, 835-6 / 39-40)

Satan cannot avoid embarrassment,

..... abasht the Devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Virtue in her shape how lovely, saw, and pin'd
His loss; but chiefly to find here observ'd
His lustre visibly impair'd; yet seem'd
Undaunted. (IV, 846-51)

Zephon's comments cut to the quick, and Satan, now "abasht," is taken aback by them. For a brief instant, he loses all confidence, and even though outwardly he

“seem’d / Undaunted,” he in fact feels highly embarrassed within and very ill at ease in the company of the good angels. In contrast to Satan’s natural self-assuredness, this is a rare moment where he feels embarrassment, and which further reveals the emotional complexity of his character.

Closely allied to, but slightly different from Satan’s grief is his sadness and misery. In the Mt. Niphates soliloquy, Satan experiences two instances of intense sadness. First, as he agonises over the vast distance separating his present sinful condition from the bliss of Heaven, he plains,

Me miserable! which way shall I fly
 Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
 Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
 And in the lowest deep a lower deep
 Still threat’ning to devour me opens wide. (IV, 73-7)

This expression of tremendous woe is followed soon after by a further example. Reflecting on the promises of victory and power he made to his troops to win their allegiance to his cause, Satan, now ruing them, moans,

..... Ay me, they little know
 How dearly I abide that boast so vain,
 Under what torments inwardly I groan:
 While they adore me on the Throne of Hell,
 With Diadem and Sceptre high advanc’t
 The lower still I fall, only supreme
 In misery. (IV, 86-92)

The passions present within him while he thinks are explicitly identified following the end of the soliloquy: “Thus while he spake, each passion dimm’d his face / Thrice

chang'd with pale, ire, envy and despair"(IV, 114-15). Misery and sadness, then, further colour Satan's emotional character.

This gloom, however, is contrasted by moments of great happiness, the first of which is the delight he displays at the verdured wealth of Paradise. The descent from Niphates' top now complete, Satan begins a reconnoitre "Of Eden, where delicious Paradise, / Now nearer, Crowns with her enclosure green"(IV, 132-3). It is the overall impression of the area — the lie of the land, the magnificent trees which "overhead upgrew / Insuperable heighth of loftiest shade"(IV, 137-8), and the myriads of natural colours "at once of golden hue / Appear'd, with gay enamell'd colours mixt"(IV, 148-9) — that thrills Satan:

..... so lovely seem'd
 That Landscape: And of pure now purer air
 Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires
 Vernal delight and joy, able to drive
 All sadness but despair. (IV, 152-6)

One should remember here that even though the narrator is describing the world, it is as though we are seeing and experiencing the world through Satan's eyes, seeing everything exactly as he does. On account of this collective consciousness, then, "the heart" refers here to that of Satan as well as ourselves, which means therefore that "Vernal delight and joy" are experienced by both parties, though nothing can dispel Satan's deep and abiding despair.

Another way in which Satan's emotional life is like ours is that he, too, experiences passion in varying degrees of intensity. It is in scenes of confrontation, when Satan finds himself face to face with an adversary, that he first displays, as

Hazlitt puts it, “the fierceness of intemperate passion.”¹¹ In Book II, as Satan’s journey takes him to the outer perimeter of Hell, his passage is opposed by the figure of Death. After a brief exchange of insults, they both assume combat stances. Growing “tenfold / More dreadful and deform”(II, 705-6), Death levels his aim at Satan, while, “on th’other side / Incens’t with indignation Satan stood / Unterrifi’d, and like a Comet burn’d”(II, 706-8). The intensity of anger aroused in Satan by his foe is likened to the brilliant glow of a flaming meteorite’s combustion. This same fierce rage is evident again when Satan, bent on beguiling Adam and Eve, first alights on earth in Book IV:

..... for now
 Satan, now first inflam’d with rage, came down,
 The Tempter ere th’Accuser of mankind,
 To wreak on innocent frail Man his loss
 Of that first Battle, and his flight to Hell. (IV, 8-12)

However, it is not just anger that Satan experiences to this fierce degree. He also feels tender and peaceful emotions with great intensity. For example, disguised as a serpent in Book IX, Satan is struck with “Such Pleasure”(IX, 455) as he gazes upon Eve’s “graceful Innocence, her every Air / Of gesture”(IX, 459-60) that it

..... with rapine sweet bereav’d
 His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
 That space the Evil one abstracted stood
 From his own evil, and for the time remain’d
 Stupidly good, of enmity disarm’d,
 Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge. (IX, 461-6)

¹¹ Hazlitt, p. 68.

Guile, hate, envy, and revenge are a permanent part of Satan from the poem's first moment; they drove him to Hell, out of Hell, and through wide Chaos to stand now, in Paradise, on the verge of fulfilling his aim of ruining mankind. However, Eve's feminine beauty awakens such intense pleasure in him that it overpowers this guile and hatred, which are not merely subdued, but briefly expelled altogether from his mind. For an instant, Satan "abstracted stood / From his own evil," and, "disarm'd, / Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge," is transported from himself as intense "delight"(IX, 468) reigns within him.

While Satan experiences intense passions which occasionally consume his mind, he is not, however, a victim of his emotions. Satan's reason directs him towards his objective, and it is reason, as we saw in the previous chapter, which enables him to control the severity of his passion. In pursuit of his will, then, the intensity of Satan's passion is to a large extent regulated voluntarily. A clear example of this is in Book II, where Satan, on learning of his close relationship with Sin and Death, quickly subdues his hatred so as to gain their allegiance in his plan. On approaching the gates of Hell, Satan's passage is barred by Death, and, after some verbal taunts, the two, like "mighty Combatants,"(II, 719) prepare to fight. However, Sin interposes and delivers in her speech a long summary of the past which includes the suggestion of a close family tie between the three:

..... thee chiefly, who full oft
 Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing
 Becam'st enamour'd, and such joy thou took'st
 With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd.
 (II, 763-6)

The fruit of this union, Sin states, was “Grim Death my Son and foe”(II, 804). On hearing this account, Satan realises that he can exploit Sin’s claim to family and win them over as allies in his plan. He quickly modifies his demeanour accordingly: “the subtle Fiend his lore / Soon learn’d, now milder, and thus answer’d smooth”(II, 815-6). Satan quells his intense hate, and “now milder,” proceeds in a manner far more appropriate to diplomatic communication. Compare the boiling hatred Satan displays in his initial insulting outbursts,

Whence and what art thou, execrable shape,
That dar’st, though grim and terrible, advance
Thy miscreated Front athwart my way
To yonder Gates? (II, 681-84)

and again to Sin,

Me Father, and that Phantasm call’st my Son?
I know thee not, nor ever saw till now
Sight more detestable than him and thee
(II, 743-5)

with that in Satan’s next remark:

Dear Daughter, since thou claim’st me for thy Sire,
And my fair Son here show’st me, the dear pledge
Of dalliance had with thee in Heav’n.
(II, 817-9)

In the last, affection now stands in the place of hate. Satan, on becoming privy to his alleged affiliation with Sin and Death, subdues his initial feelings of intense hate toward them to express concern, collegiality, and friendliness in the third passage.

The degree of intensity with which Satan experiences passion is not static. Now fierce, now calm, Satan's passions, like ours, are subject to changes in levels of intensity as situations change.

Another way in which Satan's emotional life resembles our own is in the way he experiences emotional conflict. Referring to Satan's soliloquies, John Carey notes that "his inner debate and self-criticism reveal him as a creature of dynamic tensions, such as the other characters in the poem notably lack."¹² Such "dynamic tensions," as Carey puts it, are unique to Satan because, unlike the other characters, he is prone to so many different passions. Conflict between these emotions is first evident in the frequent alternation of opposing emotions in Satan during his sun soliloquy in Book IV. From atop Mt. Niphates, Satan ponders over his life, both past and present, which whips up a clash of emotions within him. As we have seen, memories of the God whom he has betrayed and nearly totally renounced fill him with remorse:

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
 What could be less than to afford him praise,
 The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks,
 How due! (IV, 40-3/ 46-8)

Realisation of his enmity with God arouses in him further emotions that are variations of remorse. He experiences deep regret when remembering that all the angels in Heaven had "the same free Will and Power to stand"(IV, 66), and that it was he *alone* who failed when "other Powers as great / Fell not, but stand unshak'n"(IV, 63-4). But

¹² Carey, p. 134.

regret turns to anger and cursing as his error is more fully appreciated: “Nay curs’d be thou; since against his thy will / Chose freely what it now so justly rues”(IV, 71-2). In contrast to this, Satan then contemplates seeking contrition: “is there no place / Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?”(IV, 79-80). These feelings of remorse are quickly countered, however, by further opposite emotions. Repentance is hopeless since, in Satan’s view, it can only be effected “by submission; and that word / *Disdain* forbids me”(IV, 81-2). Pride and hatred consume remorse. Only a few lines later it is the reverse. Tenderness towards God is revealed when Satan thinks that he “could repent and could obtain / By Act of Grace my former state”(IV, 93-4). On the heels of contrition, however, quickly follow hate and defiance which he displays in his acknowledgment that “never can true reconcilment grow / Where wounds of deadly hate have pierc’d so deep”(IV, 98-9). Thus, throughout this long soliloquy, Satan, as Carey notes, “vacillates between remorse and defiance.”¹³ As humans commonly are, Satan is torn by two strongly contrasting emotions, remorse and hatred, which openly conflict as they vie for dominance within him.

The conflict between despair and hope towards the end of Satan’s first soliloquy in Book IX generates further strong tensions within him. No more apt an assessment of Satan’s volatile emotional nature could be given than that which he himself provides:

..... the more I see
 Pleasures about me, so much more I feel
 Torment within me, as from the hateful siege
 Of contraries. (IX, 119-22)

¹³ Carey, p. 134.

This “hateful siege / Of contraries,” as Satan puts it, is revealed throughout this soliloquy in the strong conflict between forms of despair and hope alive within him. Despair is first evident as Satan contemplates the ignominy and self-debasement involved in disguising himself as a serpent,

..... in whose mazy folds
 To hide me, and the dark intent I bring.
 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. (IX, 161-6)

However, accepting what he must do, his despair and doubt are contrasted by a more hopeful and positive attitude:

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. (IX,168-71)

Yet this confidence is sharply checked, for in the very next line, something approaching doubt and uncertainty are present as he considers the merits of revenge: “Revenge, at first though sweet, / Bitter ere long back on itself recoils”(IX, 171-2). Despite this, hope resurges in the form of renewed conviction to continue to oppose God by means of his newest creation, man:

Let it; I reck not, so it 'light well aim'd,
 on him who next
 Provokes my envy, this new Favorite
 Of Heav'n, this Man of Clay. (IX, 173-6)

Like ourselves, Satan is also prone to strong emotional conflict.

While we recognise ourselves in the extensive array of passion Satan exhibits, as well as in the strong conflict of emotion within him, these aspects of his emotional life are also displayed by Adam and Eve after the Fall. In their pre-lapsarian state, Adam and Eve know only tender love, happiness, and deep veneration for their creator and are, therefore, as Addison observes, “a different Species from that of Mankind, who are descended from them.”¹⁴ Referring to the Fall, however, Lewis notes that “Adam and Eve ‘become human’ at this point.”¹⁵ While this is true, it is possible to extend the object of fallen Adam and Eve’s resemblance beyond just ourselves. In becoming “human” through the Fall, Adam and Eve also become just like Satan who displays, as we have seen, a full and variegated passionate life over the course of the poem. These fundamental similarities which the human fall creates between Adam, Eve, and Satan are also noted by Stein when he writes, “Until the human fall occurs, nothing in Satan’s experience fully coincides with the speech, actions, or inner life of Adam and Eve.”¹⁶ After it, though, we see that Adam and Eve’s “inner life,” as Stein puts it, burns with the lust Satan knows:

Carnal desire inflaming, hee on Eve
 Began to cast lascivious Eyes, she him
 As wantonly repaid; in Lust they burn. (IX, 1013-15)

¹⁴ Addison, p. 587, no. 279.

¹⁵ Lewis, p. 128.

¹⁶ Stein, p. 84.

As a result of their sexual dalliance, “their amorous play,”(IX, 1045) they also feel, as humans sometimes do, “guilty shame”(IX, 1058). In addition to these two emotions, they are further afflicted in Book IX by a welter of strong, bad, and painful passion:

They sat them down to weep, nor only Tears
Rain'd at their Eyes, but high Winds worse within
Began to rise, high Passions, Anger, Hate,
Mistrust, Suspicion, Discord, and shook sore
Their inward State of Mind, calm Region once
And full of Peace, now tost and turbulent. (IX, 1121-126)

Thus, like Satan, they now experience a wide range of painful feelings. The emotional storm within each of them also generates animosity and heated conflict between the two: “Thus they in mutual accusation spent / The fruitless hours”(IX, 1187-8). This emotional unrest is well described by Johnson: “with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression.”¹⁷ As a consequence of the Fall, Adam and Eve experience not only numerous negative and hurtful passions, but also strong emotional conflict and discord between themselves as they attempt to lay blame for their loss of perfect happiness. Thus, because fundamental aspects of the emotional lives of the poem’s explicitly “human” characters are the same as those of Satan, he seems all the more like a human being.

Unlike God and the other good characters, then, who display a very limited number of passions, Satan experiences a full and varied array of passion. Rage, pride, hatred, malice, and disdain alternate with guilt, regret, remorse, sadness, and fear to

¹⁷ Johnson, p. 177.

form just a part of Satan's rich emotional character. In addition, soft and tender emotions, such as grief, love, compassion, and embarrassment, coexist with feelings of great despair and, at other times, joy and delight. It is in part because Satan experiences such a variety of passions, many of which are also felt by fallen Adam and Eve, that he seems so like ourselves, so human. Further enhancing this resemblance is not only the intensity of many of these passions, but also the varying degree of strength with which several are experienced. Like us, Satan is also susceptible to strong emotional tension. Remorse and hate, hope and despair, all spar for dominance within him. Satan's full, intense, and variegated passionate life, then, is the final dimension of his humanity.

While Satan is an extremely passionate being who frequently acts out of passion, he is, however, not a hothead, an irrational victim of his passion. Even in desperate and trying situations, he is never lost to passion; he does not "see red," as it were, and lash out uncontrollably, blindly, or irrationally. For example, when Satan is consumed with enormous rage while in the hands of his angelic captors in Book IV, he refrains from physically resisting, knowing that it would be futile:

The Fiend repli'd not, overcome with rage;
 But like a proud Steed rein'd, went haughty on,
 Champing his iron curb: to strive or fly
 He held it vain. (IV, 857-60)

Satan's ability to restrain his bursting passion is wonderfully rendered by Milton's simile which compares this rage to the straining and tugging, yet tightly reigned exuberance of a powerful horse. In spite of great passion boiling within him, Satan not only remains controlled, but, unlike most human beings, he also positively utilises

his prolific passion to urge him towards his personal ambitions. It is because Satan is motivated and driven in a controlled manner by his tremendous passion that he is essentially a determined and exceptional human being.

As we saw earlier, Satan's extraordinary will to God's power in part motivates his rebellion in Heaven. However, Satan's immense pride and many other passions deriving from it also drive this bid for omnipotence. As Coleridge notes, "The character of Satan is pride and sensual indulgence, finding in self the sole motive of action."¹⁸ This we are told by Raphael in Book V:

..... he of the first,
 If not the first Arch-Angel, great in Power,
 In favour and preeminence, yet fraught
 With envy against the Son of God, that day
 Honour'd by his great Father, and proclaim'd
 Messiah King anointed, and could not bear
 Through pride that sight, and thought himself impair'd.
 Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain. (V, 659-66)

At the sight of Christ being granted "all Power"(III, 317), Satan's self-leavened pride is deeply wounded and it spawns envy and further harmful passions: "Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain." It is in this highly wrought emotional state that Satan then decides to "leave / Unworshipt, unbey'd the Throne supreme / Contemptuous"(V, 669-71). The final adjective in these lines, "Contemptuous," is a further reminder of the extent to which this great effort is motivated by passion. Also deriving from Satan's pride is his "sense of injur'd merit,"(I, 98) which, as Satan says early in Book I, "with the mightiest rais'd me to contend"(I, 99). This pride is connected with ambition, as Satan indicates in his address to the sun:

¹⁸ Coleridge, p. 175.

..... 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.
 (IV, 37-41)

And at other times, this pride and ambition are mixed with fury:

The banded Powers of Satan hasting on
 With furious expedition; for they ween'd
 That selfsame day by fight, or by surprise
 To win the Mount of God, and on his Throne
 To set the envier of his State, the proud
 Aspirer. (VI, 85-90)

Spurred on by fury, Satan confronts Michael and all his legions, just as Homer's Achilles sets upon the Trojan army in the *Iliad*:

As inhuman fire sweeps on in fury through the deep angles
 of a drywood mountain and sets ablaze the depth of the timber
 and the blustering wind lashes the flame along, so Achilleus
 swept everywhere with his spear like something more than a mortal
 harrying them as they died.¹⁹

Because Satan is driven by tremendous pride, ambition, and fury, he is thus very like the single-minded and relentless Achilles.

Hate also drives Satan. This is evident first in these invigorating words Satan delivers to Beelzebub in Book I:

..... What though the field be lost?
 All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,
 And courage never to submit or yield:
 And what is else not to be overcome?

¹⁹ Homer, *Iliad*, trans. and intro. R. Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) Bk. XX, 490-93, p. 417.

That Glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. (I, 105-11)

It is remarkable, first of all, that Satan manages to display any energy and enthusiasm in this speech, since only a few lines before it, the description of Hell as “The dismal Situation waste and wild, / A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round / As one great Furnace flam’d”(I, 60-2), bespeaks enormous loss, terror, and cause for an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. However, Satan’s “unconquerable Will” and the inner fire of hate overcome this despair, and again drive him against God. Also important to note here is that the three attributes of his character which Satan mentions in this passage are followed by the rhetorical question, “And what is else not to be overcome?” Satan means that these are all he needs to continue to oppose God; they are, as he describes in the penultimate line, “That Glory.” Thus he indicates that out of all the features of his character, his will, courage, and intense passion are what he considers to be its strongest and most defining qualities. This is confirmed in the last line where he vows that these few remaining strengths God never will “Extort from me.” Furthermore, the strong drive that hate generates in Satan is revealed by the word used to qualify this passion. The “study of revenge, immortal hate” will ensure, Satan says, that “All is not lost,” when everything about him seems hopeless. Satan does not experience mild hate, but rather “immortal” hate. This extremely strong adjective denotes the most resolved and lasting degree of hatred in Satan. Moreover, his plan to exact revenge upon God is in part motivated by hatred, for as he tells himself just before ruining Eve in Book IX, “What hither brought us, hate not love”(IX, 473). Satan is thus driven by what William McQueen calls “the inverted absolutes to which he has committed himself — destruction, not creation; hate, not

love.”²⁰ Satan’s “implacable hate,”²¹ as Shelley also puts it, is not, then, a fleeting passion he feels momentarily on waking in Hell, but is rather a powerful and permanent attribute of his character which drives him, just as committed humans are driven, towards the fulfilment of his ambitions.

Deep malice further drives Satan’s antagonism with God. In Beelzebub’s final speech of the infernal council, he urges attacking man as a way of opposing God:

..... drive as we were driven,
 The puny habitants, or if not drive,
 Seduce them to our Party, that their God
 May prove their foe
 This would surpass
 Common revenge, and interrupt his joy
 In our Confusion, and our Joy upraise
 In his disturbance. (II, 366-69 / 70-73)

Following this speech, however, Beelzebub’s malice towards God is directly attributed to Satan:

..... for whence,
 But from the Author of all ill could spring
 So deep a malice, to confound the race
 Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell
 To mingle and involve, done all to spite
 The great Creator? (II, 380-5)

In addition, then, to his constant will to gain God’s almighty power, Satan has the further ambition “to confound the race / Of mankind” which has grown in his mind since he first woke in Hell. Yet this is not motivated by a strong feeling of dislike towards man — “yet no purpos’d foe / . . . League with you I seek, / And mutual amity so strait, so close”(IV, 373 / 75-6) — but instead by the enormous desire “to

²⁰ William McQueen, “‘The Hateful Siege of Contraries’: Satan’s Interior Monologues in *Paradise*

spite / The great Creator.” The desire is born from “So deep a malice” that it in part drives Satan’s meticulous planning and execution of the temptation of Adam and Eve. What is more, as Satan reapproaches earth and the human pair in Book IX, his malice has grown further still:

..... now improv’d
 In meditated fraud and malice, bent
 On man’s destruction. (IX, 54-6)

The potency of Satan’s malice, like that of a pungent cheese, has “improv’d” over time, and drives him now all the more against God and humankind.

Anger and envy also incite Satan’s action. As he alights on earth in Book IV, we learn that anger drives him:

Satan, now inflam’d with rage, came down,
 The Tempter ere th’Accuser of mankind,
 To wreak on innocent frail Man his loss
 Of that first Battle, and his flight to Hell. (IV, 9-12)

Adam and Eve have done nothing at all to wrong Satan, but, as a creation of God, they become the hapless object upon which Satan will vent or “wreak” the anger he feels from “his loss / Of that first Battle.” Satan is also driven towards his objective by immense envy. At the appointment of Messiah in Book V, we recall, Satan is “fraught / With envy against the Son of God”(VI, 661-2), a state which precipitates his preparation for rebellion. His envy is also revealed in Book IX, where during a moment of reflection prior to the temptation scene, Satan thinks,

..... Revenge, at first though sweet,

Lost,” *Milton Quarterly* 4 (1970): p. 64.

²¹ Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, p. 46.

Bitter erelong back on itself recoils;
 Let it; I reckon not, so it 'light well aim'd,
 Since higher I fall short, on him who next
 Provokes my envy, this new Favorite
 Of Heav'n, this Man of Clay, Son of despite,
 Whom us the more to spite his Maker rais'd. (IX, 171-77)

Here Satan is envious of humankind whom he now believes to be God's "new Favorite." Thus, Satan's envy of man drives him to reciprocate what he takes to be an intentionally spiteful act on God's part: "spite with spite is best repaid"(IX, 178). His insatiable anger and envy, then, relentlessly drive him to oppose God.

While Satan is in part driven by his unrelenting will to God's power, he is also driven to a great extent by his intense and prolific passion. Throughout the poem Satan acts out of passion, but, unlike weaker human beings, he is not a victim of irrational passion, and he therefore never acts rashly or uncontrollably. Instead, he harnesses positively his immense emotion to attain best the fulfilment of his will. This driving force of passion is first evident following the appointment of Messiah in Book V, where Satan's inflamed pride and contempt together with his "daring ambition"²² and will to power provoke his decision to stage rebellion. As Bloom notes, "pathos is [Satan's] glory, his abiding strength"²³ and it is exactly this we see displayed on the battlefield in Heaven where tremendous fury motivates Satan to engage continually his enemy. In Hell and on earth, too, intense hatred, malice, anger, and envy again ruthlessly drive his continued antagonism with God. Driven, then, by his tremendous will and exceptionally intense passion, Satan is a rare, committed, and ardently determined human being.

²² Hazlitt, p. 63.

²³ Bloom, p. 109.

CONCLUSION

By virtue of the fundamental attributes of his character, Satan, despite his angelic trappings, is an exceptional human being and not a supernatural agent whose nature is fundamentally different from ours. First, Satan's consciousness makes him human. Like fallen Adam and Eve, and thus ourselves, Satan is primarily concerned with himself. However, his obsession with his own status and power consumes him, much as it does Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Macbeth, and Richard III. This excessive preoccupation with the self, or "self-obsessiveness," as Bloom puts it, thus allies Satan with the exceptional human beings we see represented in tragedy. Satan's will is also extraordinary because it is not just the will to power, or even to great power, but the will to absolute power, "all Power"(III, 317), that God granted to Christ. This will remains essentially unchanged throughout the poem, and is not therefore the will of a weak, pitiful man, as Lewis argues, but of a strong and driven individual. Moreover, Satan adheres strictly to his will, in spite of the horrible consequences he must bear to fulfil it. Another factor which establishes his remarkable human nature is his strength of reason. Early in the poem's action, Satan falls, and this state of fallen being defines and shapes his character just as much as it does the terms in which he is perceived. Satan and his reason must therefore be judged within the context of this fallen state, in relation to his concern with himself, as well as his personal ambitions and drives. One such ambition is Satan's desire to oppose God by ruining Adam and Eve, and it is in relation to this aim and his fallen assumptions

about God and the world that Satan is reasonable. His speech, thought, and action reveal a shrewd, calculating, and Machiavellian intellect as it methodically advances towards the fulfilment of his will. In relation to fallen consciousness, then, Satan is supremely rational, and not the fool described by Addison, Johnson, Williams, Lewis, and Fish. Again, like fallen Adam and Eve and ourselves, Satan has a rich, intense, and variegated passionate life, but unlike many humans, he is ceaselessly driven by his exceptionally powerful emotions. And instead of acting irrationally and blindly as most passionate humans do, Satan constructively utilises this intense and violent passion to achieve his goals. Relentlessly driven not only by his tremendous passion but also by his will to God's power, Satan, over the course of the poem, exhibits not just excessiveness and persistence, but also cunning and enormous motivation, qualities which combine to make him an exceptional human being.

This basic fact about Satan is overlooked by Dryden, Addison, Blair, Johnson, and several modern anti-Satanists. According to all these critics, Satan is some kind of supernatural agent whose character, not drawn from nature, is fundamentally different from ours. In one of his later essays, Dryden observes that the majority of Milton's characters in *Paradise Lost* are supernatural: "his heavenly machines are many, and his human persons are but two."¹ Addison also notes this in an early *Spectator* paper: "*Milton's* Characters, most of them, lie out of Nature, and were to be formed purely by his own Invention."² Similarly, Blair believes that the poem would have been more appealing "had [Milton] taken a subject that was more human and less theological."³ The point is more succinctly made by Johnson: "But original

¹ Dryden, "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," p. 29.

² Addison, p. 586, no. 279.

³ Blair, p. 542.

deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt.”⁴ In the twentieth century, Musgrove asserts that Satan must be seen as “either superhuman or abhuman”⁵ while Fish takes the view that Satan’s disunion from God’s sustaining power makes him “a nonbeing.”⁶ Yet to see Satan as a character who “lie[s] out of Nature,” as one who does not derive from anything earthly but who instead is essentially supernatural, originating purely from Milton’s fancy or, as Addison puts it, “Invention,” is to impose too literal and obtuse a reading. The very attributes which form Satan’s character — his consciousness, will, reason, and passion — derive from nature, human nature, and thus come together in Satan to form a human of remarkable persistence and drive. It is because all these critics fail to observe this fundamental point that they are profoundly mistaken in their assessment of Satan.

A second and equally erroneous view held by Johnson is that readers are not greatly interested in *Paradise Lost* because it lacks sufficient human subject matter.

In his *Lives of the English Poets*, he writes,

The plan of “Paradise Lost” has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer, are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.⁷

However, if we accept my interpretation of Satan’s character, the grounds on which Johnson bases the reader’s disinterest are weak. We recall that Satan’s tremendous will to God’s power, or “the unconquerable Will”(I,106), as he himself describes it early in Book I, helps drive Satan and Beelzebub out of “the fiery Gulf”(I, 52) of Hell

⁴ Johnson, p. 185.

⁵ Musgrove, p. 302.

⁶ Fish, p. 337.

to continue their antagonism with God. The reader is here thoroughly “engaged” by the “transaction” which takes place between Satan and his flagging deputy. Furthermore, the “dynamic tensions”⁸ generated within Satan by his strong emotional conflict are just one example of a “condition” in which every reader can very readily “place himself.” These occurrences are very much a part of human nature and life, and, contrary to Johnson’s belief, provide great interest for the reader. Something of this affinity or interest the reader has with Satan is observed by Bloom when he notes, “We love Satan . . . for the same reason we secretly love his precursor Macbeth: both hero-villains are terribly interesting to us because of their terrible inwardness.”⁹ Although Bloom only refers to this one particular aspect of character, he clearly observes the tremendous interest or “love,” as he puts it, that humans have for Satan. It is apparent, then, that Johnson’s claim that readers are not interested in the poem because it lacks human interest is misguided. We are enormously interested in Satan precisely *because* he is in so many fundamental ways like us. And it is because Satan is human, and not remote, wooden, and static as are the “heavenly machines” to which Dryden refers, that the anti-Satanists, while not impressed by Satan, have been so intrigued by him.

His essential humanity further explains the intense interest the Romantics and several later Satanist critics have in him even though they also see Satan as godlike¹⁰ in some sense. Throughout Satanist criticism there is a general assumption that Satan

⁷ Johnson, p. 184.

⁸ Carey, p. 134.

⁹ Bloom, p. 107.

¹⁰ In his preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley finds Satan the only literary figure comparable to Prometheus: “The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan.” *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 201.

is in many ways human. This is evident first in the comparison Coleridge draws between Satan and infamous human beings:

It is the character so often seen *in little* on the political stage. It exhibits all the restlessness, temerity, and cunning which have marked the mighty hunters of mankind from Nimrod to Napoleon. The common fascination of men is, that these great men, as they are called, must act from some great motive.¹¹

In comparing Satan to these ruthless and calculating men, there is a strong suggestion that Satan, like the objects of the comparison, is also human. However, a comparison is not a direct or substantive assertion, but the expression of something in terms of something else, and therefore Coleridge's observation falls short of the explicit recognition that Satan is in fact a human being. This assumption also exists in Hazlitt's comparison between Satan and Homer's Achilles: "The poet has not in all this given us a mere shadowy outline; the strength is equal to the magnitude of the conception. The Achilles of Homer is not more distinct."¹² Like Coleridge, Hazlitt puts Satan in the same company as humans, but also fails to provide an explicit definition of Satan as human. Similarly, Shelley, accounting for Satan's innate evil, perceives Satan and God in terms of members of a feudal human society in which Satan is a slave, and God the tyrant: "these things are evil; and, although venial in a slave, are not to be forgiven in a tyrant."¹³ While alluding to a type of human that Satan is *like*, Shelley's observations once again lack any deliberate and concrete assertion that Satan is essentially human.

¹¹ Coleridge, p. 175.

¹² Hazlitt, p. 64.

¹³ Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed. Brett-Smith, p. 46.

This assumption underlies modern criticism as well. First, Waldock asserts that Satan is drawn from Milton's own life and nature:

But Milton expresses in Satan much more of himself than this, and such a picture of the Satan of the first two books is surely a very partial portrait . . . But it is evident that portraiture so sympathetic, drawing such strength from Milton's own life and nature, could be very dangerous for Milton's scheme.¹⁴

Even though it is clearly implied that Satan is human since Milton (from whom Satan largely originates) is human, Waldock fails to articulate this fundamental understanding. As in much of the Romantic criticism, descriptions of Satan's essential nature are given merely by virtue of how much he resembles certain human individuals. What is more, Waldock's use of the words "picture" and "partial portrait" denote some kind of representation, while also preserving the sense of a virtual, or not quite "real" relationship between Satan and the human source. Satan's essential humanity is thus never fully recognised. This assumption also exists in Empson's criticism, and is revealed in Gardner's apt description of Empson's meticulous critical method:

He treats the poem as if it were a rather subtle detective story whose point we can only discover by alertness in picking up small clues . . . If we read the poem thus, with close attention, we shall be able to spot the real criminal, and, as in all the best detective stories, he will be the most obviously unlikely candidate — God.¹⁵

And why does Empson read the poem as though it were a detective novel? Because he assumes that Satan is essentially a human figure, yet nowhere in his book *Milton's*

¹⁴ Waldock, p. 77.

¹⁵ Helen Gardner, *A Reading of Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) p. 13.

God does he bother to state this fundamental fact about the character he so admires.

Bloom, too, makes this assumption:

Speaking only for myself, I have always been in love with the Satan of *Paradise Lost*, and I cannot believe that Milton himself ever started out the day with a neo-Christian Good Morning's Hatred of his own greatest achievement in poetic representation, a hero-villain surpassing even his most direct literary forerunners, Shakespeare's Richard III, Edmund, Iago, and Macbeth.¹⁶

Bloom once again describes Satan by likening him to several heroes of Shakespearian tragedy who, while highly immoral figures, are all human beings. Furthermore, by describing Satan as "a hero-villain," Bloom imposes on him a term strictly appropriate to tragic drama in which the principal players are all human. Thus, it is under the clear understanding that Satan is human that Bloom conducts his critical analysis, yet, like many of the Satanist critics, he offers no substantive clarification of this important point. And, given that a significant proportion of the poem's action takes place in the supernatural settings of Heaven and Hell, and that the majority of the characters are Gods, angels, and devils, this is a particularly irresponsible oversight.

While the Satanists never clearly identify Satan's humanity, then, they nonetheless all work on the premise that Satan is essentially human. Like them, I also compare Satan to several prominent human figures, such as Achilles, Coriolanus, and Machiavelli. However, I make these comparisons while also explicitly recognising that Satan is a character whose nature is not supernatural but essentially human, thereby avoiding the large assumption the Satanist critics all make. Furthermore, in assuming that Satan is essentially human, these critics also fail to provide a tangible

account of his humanity. As we saw in the first chapter, Blake, Hazlitt, Shelley, and Bloom ground Satan's humanity in his virtue and passion, while for Waldo and Empson it exists in his reason. For Stoll, Hamilton, and Gardner his humanity rests in the strong emotional conflict within him, whereas Gross and Carey attribute it in part to his consciousness and thought. Thus, while they recognise various particular ways in which Satan is human, they all fall well short of establishing a full or definitive understanding of Satan's humanity. Unlike the Satanist critics, however, my understanding of his humanity is premised on all of the four fundamental attributes of character which establish us as human, namely consciousness, will, reason, and passion. And it is only by virtue of *all* these qualities that Satan can be accurately said to be a character whose nature is essentially the same as that of an exceptional human being.

Despite their failure to clearly define Satan in this way, the Satanists' admiration for their hero is ever-present in the constant comparisons they draw between Satan and other literary and historical greats. As Bloom remarks,

Milton was, I would insist, an unfallen Satan, a Lucifer, and has the same relationship to his own Satan that Shakespeare may have had to Hamlet. The true relation between Milton and his prodigal creation, Satan, is precisely that: Satan is the fallen form of John Milton, who lived and died a Lucifer.¹⁷

Drawn to a large extent from Milton's own remarkable life and character, Satan is without doubt an exceptional human being: committed, determined, and relentlessly driven.

¹⁶ Bloom, p. 99.

¹⁷ Bloom, p. 113.

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