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Giving the devil his due: The emergence of the fallen hero in English literature

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In 1637, John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, which presented the story of Satan's fall from heaven. From this text, a humanized Satan was born who, despite his evil vices, consisted of heroic traits which future authors loved. Milton's Satan became the model for future Romantic Authors including Lord George Byron. By examining specific influences in the late 1700's, one can understand how the Prince of Darkness evolved into a tragic hero.

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**Giving the Devil His Due:
The Emergence of the Fallen Hero in English Literature**

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Honor's Thesis

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Abstract

In 1637, John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, which presented the story of Satan's fall from heaven. From this text, a humanized Satan was born who, despite his evil vices, consisted of heroic traits which future authors loved. Milton's Satan became the model for future Romantic Authors including Lord George Byron. By examining specific influences in the late 1700's, one can understand how the Prince of Darkness evolved into a tragic hero.

*Don't judge me for who I am,
but what I did*

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	Page 4
Chapter One: The Origin of Satan’s Myth.....	Page 5
Chapter Two: The Foundations of Milton’s Satan.....	Page 9
Chapter Three: How did Satan Fall.....	Page 17
Chapter Four: The Emergence of the Fallen Hero.....	Page 31
Chapter Five: Lord Byron’s Influence.....	Page 38
Chapter Six: A Hero Reborn.....	Page 42
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....	Page 49
Works Cited.....	Page 50

Introduction

No other character in history has provoked as much emotion as the Devil. Most individuals believe they should fear, loathe, despise, and resist the Devil; however, these attitudes may not necessarily result from personal reflection, but rather from society's influence. This thesis assumes this common, negative attitude towards Satan and searches to answer why he should be given a second chance to reclaim his reputation. By regaining his reputation, Satan can then be considered a fallen hero of English Literature—a character who is admirable but is unjustly discriminated against. Supporting this argument, various authors have embraced the Devil and made him into a hero because they agree with what his rebellion stood for and admire the courage that he showed in his endeavors. Through the course of this thesis, I shall show how Satan, despite his infamous reputation, can be viewed as a hero in English Literature.

Chapter One: The Origin of Satan's Myth

The word Satan has been in existence for centuries. Semantically, Satan has typically been synonymous with Devil; however through the course of this thesis, it will be shown how the Devil was known as Satan and Lucifer before he became the enemy of God and man. Although the Devil's story has been altered and changed overtime, the word has always stirred strong connotations from individuals. To this day, for the majority of society, the Devil represents the pinnacle of evil due to the negative association that religious groups have associated with the term. Examining the origin of the word "Satan" and investigating the religious faith of the Western European tradition reveals how the term came to represent the Prince of Darkness.

The origins of Satan come from a variety of religions stories. Jeffrey Burton Russell notes in his book *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* that the Devil is not just another demon, but "a personification of the force of evil itself" (23). The tale of the Devil typically involves his rebellion against God and or corrupting mankind. For example, Elaine Pagels notes that, in Hebrew Satan takes on the role of "the opponent" (106). He continuously questions God's authority and actions, which leads him to fall out of favor with God and to be sent from Heaven. Although Satan is mentioned in these texts as a tester of faith and opponent of God, he has not yet developed the evil stature that is commonly associated with him today.

In fact, other interpretations present Satan working under God. Certain accounts call Satan a "close" enemy of God since he was the highest angel in God's command. Jeffrey Burton Russell cites in his book that St. Augustine believed "the higher an angel

stood in the ranks of heaven, the lower it plunged into Hell” (213). Satan, he then deduces, would be at the lowest depths of Hell since he at one point served at the side of God. This type of description of Satan is overlooked frequently because of the common focus on Satan’s evil and habitation in Hell. Nonetheless, Satan at one time was God’s most loyal archangel. Elaine Pagels describes that in the Bible, “Job envisions Satan as a member of God’s council who tests the limit of his loyalty to God” (106). This depiction shows Satan’s character not representing evil but someone who questions authority and tests man’s faith as God’s servant. Society did not view Satan in these textual citations as the pinnacle of evil; however, as history progressed, religious interpretations changed and the Satan’s character did likewise.

Approximately six hundred BCE, the Jewish community changed their view of Satan due to events that took place in their society. Different sects of Judaism began to form their own various opinions about God, which caused minorities to parallel their situation with Satan’s. Members of each community began to compare those who held opinions different from their own to Satan’s refuting of God’s authority. In turn, Elaine Pagels claims, the Jewish community as a whole came to view Satan as an arrogant angel who defied his commander in Heaven (116). Questioning authority became one of the worst sins, and since Satan’s story describes such actions, he became associated with the ultimate sin: questioning God.

Along with the Judaism’s interpretation of the Devil’s story, multiple other religious sects developed similar conclusions about his story. Tertullian, the first Latin theologian, who lived approximately 200 AD, believed that the Devil was created good, but succumbed to evil on his own and uses “fury, lust, delusion, and madness” to oppose

God (Russell, 98). Tertullian's religious philosophies seem analogous with his predecessors' beliefs, which also viewed the Devil as absolute evil. Like Tertullian, Saint Ignatius, bishop of Antioch approximately 107 A.D., believed that "the Devil's purpose is to corrupt and divert people from serving God" (Russell, 35). Russell also cites how Saint Ignatius claimed that those who opposed the church's rule must be agents of the Devil and should be punished accordingly (35). What is evident from these historical events is the evil associated with the Devil. Once the Devil's malevolent reputation increased through the first centuries A.D., society began to associate evil acts or individuals with him and their distaste for Satan grew accordingly.

With individuals' increased revulsion for Satan, this rebellious character gained much infamy. In popular opinion, people believed Satan rebelled against God and tried to ruin mankind because of envying God's power. In the second and first centuries BCE, Jewish storytellers passed on legends that presented Satan not only rebelling against God's power, but also, according to Elaine Pagels, mating with human women (114). Satan had now completely become a despicable character who loved the flesh and wanted to ruin mankind in order to spite God. The popular notion of Satan had changed from the image of one who tested man's faith in God into a diabolical, fearful character.

In the fourth and fifth century A.D., Satan's image became severely altered by the Roman Society also contributing to individuals' fear of the Devil. Russell notes in his book how "the image of the Devil grew more sinister perhaps in response to the growing dislocation of Roman Society" (190). Russell notes how the Western Church associated the Devil with fire because of its representation of torment, and the Devil was typically shown in black to symbolize his lack of goodness (190). What surfaces from this

alteration is that Satan's appearance did not happen from spontaneous chance, but rather in response to historical influence from the Church. This shows that Satan's association with evil led to his connection with misfortunes in history.

People thus began to fear coming under Satan's will and living by an order of sin. Elaine Pagels notes, for example, that during BCE times, the Israelites blamed misfortunes on the Devil (108). However, as his infamy grew leading into the A.D. centuries so did his association with misfortunes. During the Middle Ages, witch hunts, the Inquisition, and the Crusades can be attributed to people's fear of Satan's evil. Russell notes in a second book, *Lucifer: The Devil of the Middle Ages*, that during the Inquisition, enemies of the church were thought to be tortured souls under the devil's possession engaging in sexual orgies, cannibalism, and making sacrifices to the Devil (190). Since people explained actions through their religious beliefs, Satan became associated with evil that took place in the world. Although religious beliefs changed over the centuries, up through the Middle Ages, one belief stood firm: Satan was the root of all evil and most feared character in history.

Examining Satan's history, it is evident that he did not always have negative connotation with his name. In fact, at one point in time, Satan was known as the highest angel that served by the right-side of God. Although this image was lost through the Middle Ages, Satan would be given a chance to plead his case again once society's times and needs summoned his assistance.

Chapter Two: The Foundations of Milton's Satan

Up through the 1600's, Satan's character had been created from various societies and cultures that shaped his character into myth and legend. However, John Milton's portrayal is one of the most influential accounts of Satan in English literature because it introduces a new way to view Satan. In 1667, Stephen Orgel and Jeff Goldberg note, Milton authored *Paradise Lost*, a story in which Milton attempts to "[justify] God's way to man" (XVI). In doing so, he uses Satan's character as the main instrument in the orchestra that explains the world's corruption, leading man away from the true God. Satan becomes the main character of *Paradise Lost* because of the people and concepts that he represents to Milton. Disregarding the argument of who or what Satan represents and accepting that he is evil, an appealing perspective develops with Satan's rebellion. He goes too far with his cause, becoming consumed with his own personal goals and falling into a hell he himself creates. Milton depicts the point in Satan's rebellion when he goes too far in his cause and earns the title, "Prince of Darkness."

Milton's critical view of Christianity is shown through Satan in *Paradise Lost*. According to Orgel and Goldberg, Milton's parents were Protestant with Puritan beliefs, which provided him with the foundations of his religious faith (VII). With the civil war impending in England, Milton examined and modified his beliefs as he saw fit. Although his parents intended to have him attend a university to pursue holy orders, Milton did not want to be involved with the corruption which he saw unfolding before him in the established church. Orgel and Goldberg say that the Anglican Church had alienated Milton so much that he no longer wished to pursue holy orders (VII). Instead, Milton

pursued work in philosophy at the University of Cambridge. Milton wished to affirm and create his own understanding of God by using his reason instead of blindly accepting his parents' religion. In this pursuit, Milton created his own mix of religion, which was critical of the Christian fallacies that he believed existed.

The writings that Milton began in his mid-teens provide insight into his religious beliefs. His passion for blending religions into new original forms led to Milton's original and unique faith. C.S Lewis notes in his *Preface to Paradise Lost* that Milton's fascination with Pagan and biblical fusions surfaces in his written poetry (7). This "fusion" led Milton to create a type of faith that inspired him to show the world the true meaning of God along with the distortion that formalistic practices created. The Christian doctrines Milton espoused, which were found only after his death, depict exactly how "unorthodox" his theological beliefs became over his lifetime (Orgel and Goldberg XVI). Milton had been raised in a formalistic religious household, but he chose not to accept such religious practice at face value because he was irritated by the politics which surrounded them. Instead, Milton created a very unique type of faith that led him to praise certain characteristics he believed every person should include in his or her own life.

Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* deriving principles from his personalized faith that allowed him to develop specific civic guidelines. C.S. Lewis notes that Milton believed those with less knowledge should yield to those who are more knowledgeable (80). Because Milton believed that church politics corrupted men with power, he would not desire men to submit to one another without reasonable justification. However, in Satan's case, Milton affirms to the reader his strong faith in God. To Milton, God's rule

in its pure form is correct and should not be questioned even if it is illogical. God has an intended plan with his work, and no other individual has a right to influence his plan because, in Milton's opinion, God is the ultimate power. By showing Satan's quest to oppose God's rule, Milton depicts exactly what happens to those who rebel against God: they fall into desolation and an inescapable, personal hell.

Milton's belief in God should not come into question even though his faith differed from formalistic practices. Those who fall under the supreme ruler, God, should submit to his rule. Addison notes that Milton believed "obedience to the will of God makes men happy" (Lewis 70). Milton believed that obeying God should not be questioned and will make individuals happy. Throughout Milton's work, as Lewis notes, he "cares and demands order, proportion, and control" (79). These are characteristics that Milton wrote about due to their importance in the world. In *Paradise Lost*, he demonstrates that Adam and Eve's happiness stems from practicing these principles, and that Satan's self-anguish derives from his rebellion against them. Milton firmly believed that, by valuing the importance of proportion, control, and order, individuals would be able to better understand God and in turn lead better lives. With a sense of obligation to share his revelation, Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, in which he takes the opportunity to use his unorthodox faith to reveal the correct way to find one's way to Heaven and the errors he found in Christianity. Orgel and Goldberg claim that this is Milton's way of "confronting fallen Christianity with its failures" (XVI), and this is Milton's unlikely plan for saving mankind.

With Milton's religious beliefs considered, Satan's role in the poem can be examined from Milton's religious perspective. The fact that people still resented Satan in

the 1660's played a critical role in Milton's choice to use "The Fall" as his paintbrush to depict the development of the many shortcomings of Christianity. Milton personified these errors in Satan's character so that they would be magnified for the reader to analyze. He already has his readers agreeing with his views of Satan in the 1600's because society had a negative bias towards him. Lewis notes that Milton knew he could have Satan preach anything in the story without his readers taking it to heart, because at the time men believed that Satan was untrustworthy (98). Milton had bypassed the question of whether Satan was actually a good character in his story because he knew society would already label him as the villain. Instead, Milton attempts to demonstrate how Satan, who initially served God, became envious of power and consumed with personal gain. Knowing Milton's religious beliefs, the reader can understand how he took the liberty of making Satan personable because he found it implausible to sympathize with Satan knowing that he represented evil. He would never conceive the notion to overlook one's bias to judge Satan's character as a whole. However, Milton's intent to show exactly where Satan went astray in his pursuit against God portrays Satan in a new manner.

Giving even greater insight into Satan's character in *Paradise Lost* was the ongoing political turmoil occurring in England during Milton's lifetime. Further motive for Milton's portrayal of Satan surfaces in examining the corrupt politicians in the 1600's. In Milton's constant quest to discover exactly "how far is too far," he introduces the political turmoil in England into *Paradise Lost* by examining what he sees as individuals' quest for personal liberty and their inevitable downfall due to personal greed.

An individual who embodies this notion was Charles I, who, according to Orgel and Goldberg, desired to unify England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland culturally, politically, and religiously (X). Included in this unification, Charles I wanted to impose the Anglican Bible onto the Presbyterian Church; remove the Church of Scotland, doing away with the Bishop; and place the King of England in charge of the church (Orgel & Goldberg, X). Milton would not, presumably, have been in favor of an unjust individual imposing such unification. As a result, Milton would have considered this individual to have gone too far with his power and would have believed he must be removed. Because of this, Milton supported Cromwell's rebellion against the King and wrote multiple pamphlets supporting his claim, including *Areopagitica*, which directly questions the divine rights of kings. Once Cromwell did overthrow Charles I in 1645, Charles I was tried, imprisoned, and finally executed in 1649. When the Royalists published the book, *Eikon Basilike (The Royal Image)*, glorifying the King and explaining his divinity and unjust death due to Parliament, Cromwell appointed Milton as the Secretary for Foreign Languages in the Council of the State to counter the propaganda (Orgel & Goldberg, XII).

Milton believed he was witnessing those in the highest power of society abuse their privileged positions and impose their wills onto those who did not have power. In 1649 Milton quickly produced *Eikonoklastes (The Image Breaker)* which explained why Charles I had abused his power and insisted that kings do not deserve to be treated as divine. Milton associated Charles I with tyranny when he attempted to overstep these boundaries. Milton, who was an advocate of men discovering their own personal liberty, would have been more inclined to have democracy rule when deciding individuals'

rights. However, since democracy did not exist in England, Milton witnessed an individual's attempt to oppress a large group of others which led to that person's unfortunate fall.

Similarly, once Cromwell stepped into power, he too abused his political rights. Cromwell became greedy in his new position and insisted on having certain privileges. He wanted to become King and, "Protector of England," which led to his setting up a cruel governmental system. Milton did not approve of this turn of events and quickly criticized Cromwell's tactics, accusing him of only wanting individual support for his own personal gain. Joan Bennett says in her article, "God, Satan, and King Charles: Milton's Royal Portraits" that Milton concluded that the tyrant's goal is to use rational power to rule, but ultimately he desires fame (451). Milton did not believe that Cromwell's concerns resided with the people, instead, he only wanted to become "Protector of England" to become more famous. Cromwell's tactics with England's politics shaped the beliefs that Milton would set forth in *Paradise Lost*. Milton witnessed great men oppose authority for society's rights by removing tyrants from power only to become corrupted themselves. Like their adversaries, they too submitted because their efforts for the greater good of men transformed into goals for their own personal agendas and led to their ultimate demise.

In 1658, Cromwell passed away, which left the king's position vacant. In 1660, Parliament brought back Charles I's heir, Charles II, to become king, which meant Milton would be punished for his earlier pamphlets discrediting the King's divine power. According to Goldberg and Orgel, Milton was imprisoned and his pamphlets destroyed the year Charles II began his rule (XII). While imprisoned, Milton may have questioned

his own intent in the turmoil occurring in England. Like Cromwell and Charles I, Milton may have gone too far with his work, which led to his sentence in prison. However, while in jail, Milton clearly explored the question, “Did I go too far?” because, shortly thereafter, the publication of *Paradise Lost* occurred, and the characters in the poem also explore this ethical question.

To assist him in his journey, Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* in the epic style, which perplexed many people. Milton’s spiritual beliefs, along with the political turmoil in England at the time, provided ample motivation for Milton’s writing of *Paradise Lost*. However, the style which Milton uses in this story also supports the claim that he intended to show the reader exactly how far is too far. By writing *Paradise Lost* in the epic style, Milton led his readers to expect certain literary norms. John Steadman says in his article, “The Idea of Satan as the Hero of ‘Paradise Lost’” that typically in this form, the hero is clearly identified, but when critics could not establish which character fit this role, they quickly became confused (256). Unlike authors whom Milton loved, Homer and Virgil, he chose not to define character roles but still intended to present ideas through his characters. Like Homer’s Achilles in *The Iliad*, Milton’s Satan opposes authority, and although he experiences short term success, he ultimately creates his own demise. By doing this, Milton personalizes Satan and asks the reader, “When did Satan go too far?” By writing the poem in this fashion, Milton is able to convey certain points that would not have otherwise been clear to the reader.

Throughout the text of *Paradise Lost*, the reader must try to sift through the difficult wording in order to see Milton’s point. C.S Lewis describes the imagery as simple while the syntax is complex (44). However, the clear imagery helps the reader to

understand the intricate syntax and thus understand Satan himself. Milton is personalizing Satan so the reader can understand the constant struggle Satan is experiencing: C.S. Lewis states in *Preface to Paradise Lost*, “[Milton] is telling the story of a spiritual pilgrimage- how one soul fared in its passage through the universe and how all may fear and hope to fare” (128). Satan’s pilgrimage shows the reader the difficulty which one runs up against when trying to distinguish between personal liberty and obedience. By writing *Paradise Lost* in epic form, Milton aids his reader’s understanding of the personal struggles one encounters in trying to understand their relationship with God. Milton has his reader try to distinguish where the characters in *Paradise Lost* stray from the path of righteousness, and what each individual reader would have done differently if placed in the same situation.

Through the examination of Milton’s personal beliefs, the political turmoil in England, and also the text’s epic style, the intent behind writing *Paradise Lost* emerges for the reader. Milton’s philosophical questions do not seem to be focused around the idea of Satan as much as they are around the intent behind Satan’s actions. It can be argued that Milton attempts to give the devil his due when he wrote *Paradise Lost*, but it is probable that Milton also related to the character’s struggle against power- because he also questioned when he should stop opposing authority. Milton did not intend to make the focus of his book the character of Satan but rather the idea the creature had when questioning the higher powers above him. Looking into the text of *Paradise Lost*, Satan becomes personified, and for the first time in history, people begin to identify with the character and recognize his questions as ones that they may have themselves.

Chapter Three: How did Satan Fall?

After examining Milton's beliefs and the political warfare of the time in England, one can understand the background to *Paradise Lost*. It is necessary to be familiar with Milton's motives before evaluating Satan in the epic poem. Satan shows the reader how an individual can begin as nearly perfect, yet when consumed with revenge and envy, can lose everything they once cherished. Writing *Paradise Lost*, Milton depicts exactly how Lucifer goes too far in his rebellion against God. Although initially pursuing an admirable cause, Lucifer realizes his own downfall and consequently sentences himself to his own damnation. Thinking that he has passed the point of reconciliation, Satan believes he has no choice but to devote himself to evil and surge ahead deeper into his own personal Hell, thus becoming the Prince of Darkness.

Milton clearly states that his intention in writing *Paradise Lost* is to "justify God's ways to man" but, at the same time, he writes Satan's untold story, humanizing and depicting the beauty of his character. Although Lucifer fell from Heaven, his character is nearly in its full angelic form at the beginning of the poem, showing the reader the heroic traits of the rebellious archangel. Through the course of the text, Lucifer's appearance shrivels away, corresponding to his degeneration in character. Through Lucifer's downfall, a reader can understand how one can sentence oneself to an eternity of damnation and create evil from intended good.

Satan's physical appearance is the first aspect to degenerate from its angelic form. From the beginning to the end of the poem, Lucifer changes from a beautiful angel, who appears out of place in Hell, to a crawling snake that is condemned to eat the dust from

the ground, but before Satan takes on the shape of the snake, he slides down a slippery slope of envy and hatred. In contrast to Lucifer, who fought heroically in the battle for Heaven, Satan “shape-shifts” to manipulate his adversaries and ruin mankind.

In Book I, Satan is found in the lake of fire after being thrown out of Heaven with the rest of the rebel angels. Milton describes Hell as,

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed, Yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges. . .

(I.61-68)

This description of Hell creates an image of individuals that have abandoned any hope of reclaiming their purity. In this setting, Satan’s courage surfaces from the depths of Hell through the disparity between his character and his surroundings. Describing Hell’s dreadfulness allows Lucifer’s valiant appearance to shine through, illuminating how brilliant the angel once appeared in Heaven.

Lucifer, now in Hell, is first shown in the lake of fire. His appearance does not seem to agree with that of Hell because of his energy and beauty. John Steadman, for example, says that Satan is originally left close to the appearance of Lucifer when first shown in *Paradise Lost* (272). The reader has the opportunity to admire traits that had not been described in previous texts about Satan because he has always been portrayed as the enemy of God. In Book I, Lucifer is described, “With [his] head uplift above the wave, and eyes / That sparkling blazed...” (I.193-194). Emotion and pride are still unmistakable in Satan’s appearance and demeanor, even though he has just lost the war

in Heaven. He is too proud to bow his head below the lake's surface, and his eyes still have the burning desire to lead his troops to victory. It is no surprise then that Satan emerges from the water, spreads his wings, and escapes from the fire. Coming out of the water, Satan flies with "His mighty stature. . ." and with "expanded wings. . ." (I.222, 225). He seems out of place in Hell because of his heavenly attributes, which are highlighted by his perseverance. Although the reader assumes Satan is the evil character in *Paradise Lost*, he looks so magnificent that the reader admires this Lucifer, who at one time was the most beautiful archangel and served by the side of God.



The physical appearance of Lucifer reflects Milton's depiction of him as a fearless leader. After the rest of the rebel angels pull themselves out of the lake of fire, and Satan has assessed the situation, he looks out upon his army and reflects on his actions:

Above them all the archangel: but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage and considerate pride
Waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion to behold
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemned
Forever now to have their lot in pain,
Millions of spirits for his fault amerced
Of Heaven, and from eternal splendors flung
For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood,
Their glory withered.

(I.600-612)

This passage makes Satan appear heroic because it highlights how millions followed him with complete faith and dedication. "Deep scars" represent the pain and combat that he

has suffered to defend his beliefs and followers. What is subtle but important to note in this passage is the revenge which Satan shows in his face. At this time, the angel's emotions are mixed between revenge and remorse because he desires to overthrow God while sympathizing with the group of angels who fought beside him. Examining the depiction of Satan's face, the reader admires the character's opposition to God, aware of his small chance of success. His courageous actions shine through his appearance in the earlier books of *Paradise Lost*.

In the earlier books, Satan still appears like Lucifer, but as the story progresses, his heroic traits begin to deteriorate. Steadman says that Satan's appearance shows the change in his character; his heroic traits have now become vices (293). The physical degeneration of Satan begins to occur when he is on earth for the first time and admiring Paradise: "Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his face, / Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy, and despair;" (IV.114-115). Satan's once "blazing eyes" have been dimmed by his own envy. He has lost his majestic feel while his character as a whole diminishes.

The degradation of Satan's transformations reflects his corruption. When he arrives in Paradise, Lucifer is in his angelic form but quickly alters into a cherub, a lesser angel, to disguise himself from God's angels, who are roaming the land. From this form, he changes into a wolf in order to jump over the gate into Eden, and then he turns into a sea bird, so that he is able to spy on Adam and Eve and investigate the setting. Each of these transformations lowers his status and symbolizes his loss of character. The once battle-worn angel, who at first seemed so prestigious in Hell, now appears much less beautiful.

The final step in Satan's physical degradation occurs when he puts himself in the serpent's body: "[The] serpent, inmate, bad, and toward Eve / Addressed his way, not with indented wave, / Prone on the ground. . ." (IX.495-497). The once beautiful archangel, who flew out of the burning lake, has become a crawling creature slithering to his prey and eternal damnation. Heaven's feathered wings have been replaced by the scales of deception associated with Satan and his work. As punishment, God condemns Satan to this form for eternity, ensuring the complete and permanent degradation of Satan.

Despite his eventual damnation and snake-like-state, however, the reader cannot overlook Satan's heroism from *Paradise Lost's* early books. Although Satan eventually becomes a damned serpent, his early image is too heroic to disregard. His actions similarly demonstrate how he degenerates throughout the *Paradise Lost*. Lucifer, who questions God's decision to place Jesus in higher command than any of the archangels, demands justification for being overlooked. Satan's opposition to tyranny is admirable for its cause, but ultimately goes astray because his motivation alters. Before Lucifer becomes corrupted, glimpses of a hero are seen through the adversity that he faces in his endeavors.

Lucifer has clearly gained the respect of his followers from the War in Heaven. Beelzebub's praise demonstrates that those who follow Satan admire him and his courage. He says:

O prince, O chief of many throned powers,
That led the embattled seraphim to war
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds
Fearless, endangered Heaven's perpetual king;
And put to proof his high supremacy. . .
(I.128-132)

The angels who have been cast out of Heaven with Lucifer believe in his argument that they should not follow God without justification. Satan is heroic in his ability to liberate the angels and persuade them to oppose their creator. The rebel angels, conditioned to believe everything God tells them, think they are enlightened and can now be critical of their creator. Lucifer is showing them the sanctity of their own minds and the power that each one of them possesses within themselves. For example, when the rebel angels are depressed and trying to regroup from their fall from Heaven, Lucifer tells them, “The mind is its own place, and in itself Can make a heaven of hell, a hell a heaven” (I.254-256). He restores his followers’ hope, assuring them that they will not be eternally damned, but may indeed be better off for their rebellion. Lucifer reminds them:

Here at least
We shall be free; the almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in hell:
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in heaven.
(I.258-263)

Satan’s words obscure his evil reputation, seducing the reader to his cause that the mind can set one free. In doing so, he wishes to free the angels from God’s corrupted authority. The rebel angels side with Satan, and Milton depicts their reaction in hearing Satan’s words, saying, “He spake: and to confirm his words, out flew / Millions of flaming swords. . .” (I.663-664). Although the rebel angels may be transferring their obedience from one ruler to the next, Satan appears at the time to have their better interests at heart. He feels guilty knowing that millions have been tied to his fate, and by failing, he will be condemning not only himself to an eternity in Hell, but his followers as well.

Satan's resiliency also creates belief that he and the rebel angels can still redeem themselves and emerge from Hell magnificent. Satan claims, "From this descent / Celestial virtues rising, will appear / More glorious and more dread than from no fall. . ." (II.14-16). Falling into Hell, Satan believes that the angels will be wiser and more beautiful from the lost battles. His resiliency is especially heroic because, in contrast, his fellow rebel angels are terrified to oppose God once again.

When the rebel angels debate if coordinating another war in Heaven is wise, the reader discovers that not many angels are still courageous and prideful. Satan may believe they should not have rebelled, but he will not allow the angels to witness his fear. Instead, Satan suggests perverting mankind as their new strategy to regain their glory.

When searching for an individual to bear the daring quest, Satan volunteers himself,



gallantly declaring, "Through all the coasts of dark destruction seek / Deliverance for us all. This enterprise / None shall partake with me. . ." (II.464-466). Satan has does not know how to complete his next quest, but he does not want others to risk any more. Unlike his adversary, God, Satan intends to show his followers that he deserves their respect and loyalty because he will

lead by example. John Steadman points out that venturing out into the wilderness is what gains Satan his heroic traits (274). Satan appears admirable, but at the same time, he appears ready to pursue his own personal revenge against God because of the overwhelming pain he has suffered.

Like his angelic appearance, Lucifer's initial actions are heroic. Demanding that God answer justified questions and liberate millions of angels from the "yoke" of obedience makes Lucifer admirable. Milton is conveying that Lucifer initially meant to do well, however his cause deteriorates. After Satan's departure for Eden, his actions become cowardly, and like his appearance, pathetic. Observing the degeneration of his actions, one understands how a heroic Lucifer became the popularly known Devil. Initially, Lucifer is admirably venturing into the abyss by himself for his fellow angels' redemption; however his thirst for revenge cannot be overlooked. Instead of opposing God, as in the Battle for Heaven, he is now trying to defeat God with little honor. The narrator says Satan is now, "bent / On man's destruction. . ." (IX.55-56) which suggests he no longer cares about how he seeks his revenge against God. Seeing the beauty in Paradise, all Satan can think about is self-pity and how corrupting man will cure his suffering.

Satan is methodical and underhanded in his attempt to corrupt Adam and Eve. He waits until Adam is no longer with Eve to "corrupt her mind." Satan explains, "I will excite their minds / With more desire to know, and to reject / Envious commands. . ." (IV.522-524). The once glorious Lucifer, who led angels into battle, is replaced by an underhanded coward who is attempting to beat God without facing him. Unlike when Lucifer appealed to the rebel angels' reason, he is poisoning the inferior humans, giving them no choice but to obey him.

At this point in Satan's fall, he is not considering consequences because of his fixation on ruining God's work. He pronounces to himself, "For only in destroying I find ease / To my relentless thoughts. . ." (IX.129-130). Satan's fixation on his abhorrence

towards God causes his lack of consideration for others' well-being. His insensible attitude towards innocent bystanders tarnishes the heroic image created by the earlier books in *Paradise Lost*. The Lucifer in the early books would not have disregarded the welfare of others so easily, as his speeches in Hell make clear. Satan is now preoccupied with settling his own personal vendetta with God, however, and all others are lost to him. Satan says, "To me shall be the glory sole. . ." (IX.135). Lucifer's original intention, saving his followers from eternal damnation, has turned into his quest to "pervert" God's work. Satan's sole intent now is to seduce Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge and oppose God's rule.

Mankind became perverted once Adam and Eve ate the apple from the Tree of Knowledge; however, unlike their actions; Satan's temptation of man sealed his eternal damnation. Satan could have been forgiven for his earlier actions, but he will clearly never seek repentance after ruining mankind. Milton depicts Satan as unable to admit wrong and ask for mercy: this is his tragic flaw. Once Satan accomplishes his goal of corrupting Adam and Eve, it is clear that he has lost sight of his intended goal, and the beautiful archangel is lost forever. Milton depicts how far is too far through the Prince of Darkness's birth. No longer do the angelic qualities of Lucifer shine through, but rather a dark cloud of revenge surrounds the beautiful archangel and brings forth the Devil as he is popularly known: the corrupter of good, the keeper of Hell, and most vividly, the pinnacle of evil.

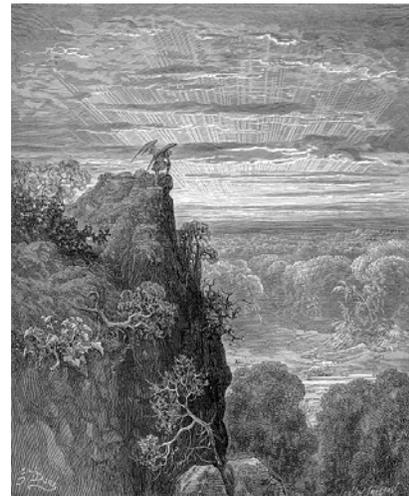
Satan's emotional transformation changes him more than either his physical appearance or his action, however, and leads him to grow the horns of the Devil. The emotional transformations that Satan experiences cause his shift in character. Initially,

Lucifer appears majestic after falling from Heaven, and his emotions correspond to his appearance, making him appear close to a god. Lucifer is still prideful when others are timid and scared because of their actions. Beelzebub, desiring relief in Hell, questions whether it wouldn't be better not to have strength. Lucifer replies, "Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable. . ." (I.157). He and his fellow angels are suffering pain unlike anything another creature has ever felt, but Lucifer desires the ache because it reminds him that he still has the valor to continue his rebellion against God. This passage demonstrates Lucifer's remaining pride and unyielding courage. Steadman agrees that Lucifer does not seem to change his goal of beating God because he "demonstrates a fixed mind and an unconquerable will" (291). These heroic traits remind the reader that he is rebelling because it is for the greater good. He believes that God is committing tyranny and is attempting to save the rebel angels from a corrupt leader. Lucifer's behavior is heroic because he refuses to forfeit his cause knowing that there is a remote chance of success. Lucifer parallels a last soldier in a war with sword drawn charging the battlefield with little hope of prevailing, but confident that he has devoted himself to a greater cause that is worth his self-demise. He attempts to rally his troops initially in Hell by claiming, "All is not lost; the unconquerable will, / And study of revenge, immortal hate, / And courage to never submit or yield. . ." (I.106-108). Lucifer's motivational speech demonstrates that he will not let God's power be unquestioned. His "unconquerable will" motivates him out of the lake of fire to search through the unknown abyss to find Paradise. His unwillingness to submit or yield is courageous because he is opposing the conditioned beliefs that the angels have never questioned previously. Through this speech, the reader sees hints of Lucifer's virtuous emotions turning into

vices. Satan's hatred towards God will become too much for him to control and will motivate him to extreme actions. His actions are evidence that Satan will go to horrible lengths to achieve victory, but by understanding his emotional state, the reader witnesses just how the fallen archangel transforms into the pinnacle of evil.

Rostrevor Hamilton cites that everything Satan does is based on avenging himself on God (27). He initially intends to free his companions and reclaim their places in

Heaven, but once he sees Paradise, Satan's pride and courage change to pity. "By change of place: now conscience wakes despair / That slumbered, wakes the bitter memory / Of what he was, what is, and what must be. . ." (IV.23-25). Seeing Paradise's beauty, Satan realizes how magnificent he initially appeared as Lucifer: "how glorious once above thy sphere; /



Till pride and worse ambition threw me down" (IV.39-40). After questioning God, fighting angels, falling from Heaven, and flying to Paradise, Satan realizes he is ruining himself. The once beautiful angel is beginning to shrivel away because of his emotional experience. Realizing that he cannot return to Heaven causes Lucifer's liberated mind to descend into in self-pity, which fuels his anger towards God. Satan no longer desires to be with God, but now that his own mind has become an internal Hell, he no longer feels heroic: "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (IV.75). Satan now only worries about himself and his forfeited place in Heaven instead of being concerned about the well-being of the rebel angels. Hamilton notes that the love which he had for others has now turned inwards towards love for himself (17). Satan's hatred towards God has

subsided for the moment because he is too concerned for his own welfare, and through his self-pity, his craving for destruction grows and draws him closer to his inevitable doom.

While Satan's self-pity grows, he realizes that he has committed too much harm to ever return to his glory. Instead of attempting to go back and ask God for forgiveness, Satan decides that his only chance for redemption is to embrace his pain and make it his new motivation. Instead of trying to redeem himself so he can be accepted by others, he will now attempt to create pain for others. Satan declares, "So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear, / Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost: / Evil be thou good. . . ." (IV.108-110). At this point in the poem, Satan's emotions have completely become self-absorbed, causing him to lose focus on his intended goal. Milton shows that, when one's emotions turn into self-pity, they cause the destruction of the self. Although Satan desires to feel the warmth of being good once again, his pity for himself only fuels his hatred towards God, so that he is only left with the desire to destroy.

When Satan appears in Book IX, he has now become a creature that has forgotten his initial ambitions. He is a slithering snake looking to corrupt mankind and claim his revenge against God, but before he turns into the tempting serpent, Satan regrets committing evil in his rebellion. Looking at the earth, he has one last desperate monologue, showing the reader how much pain and envy has consumed him.

Reminiscing, he cries:

With what delight could I have walked thee round,
If I could joy in aught, sweet interchange
Of hill, and valley, and rivers, woods and plains,
Now land, now sea, and shores with forest crowned,
Rocks, dens, and caves; but I in none of these
Find place or refuge; and the more I see

Pleasures about me, so much more I feel
Torment within me, as from the hateful siege
Of contraries; all good to me becomes
Bane. . .

(IX.114-123)

Satan is now fully aware that he could have been happy in Heaven and cherished Paradise like the rest of God's angels. However, now all he feels is "the hot Hell that always in him burns. . ." (IX.467). He is now no longer the courageous angel whose concerns resided with his company and freedom, but instead he is focused on destroying in the name of hatred.

When Satan persuades Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, he shows how far his emotions have fallen. He hopes that by completing his mission his internal hell will abate; however, when it does not, Satan returns to Hell feeling guilty. In Hell, he hopes to feel pride and joy for ruining mankind, but instead, God punishes him and the rest of the rebel angels for his actions by condemning them to be snakes. They are described in *Paradise Lost* in a constant state of desire for that which they can never have:

Their earnest eyes they fixed, imagining
For one forbidden tree a multitude
Now risen, to work them further woe or shame;
Yet parched with scalding thirst and hunger fierce,
Though to delude them sent, could not abstain,
But on they rolled in heaps, and up the trees
(X.553-359)

This is an appropriate end for Satan, ensuring his state of desire will be eternal. Being placed in the body of a snake, Satan has now completely fallen emotionally and no longer desires to do well. Milton shows Satan's evil through the twisted emotional state he has

developed, which does not allow him to seek forgiveness for his sins. Satan's dysfunctional state of mind fuels him to commit evil and degenerate into the Devil.

Examining Satan in *Paradise Lost*, the reader discovers why Milton believes this character is evil. Satan shows heroic virtues in the beginning of the poem, but because his mind is corrupted by fixated revenge, he becomes the root of all evil and the Devil as he is popularly known. *Paradise Lost* humanizes Satan so that the reader understands that one becomes evil through reaction to circumstance and not by natural inclination to do wrong. If Lucifer, who is shown to be the most glorious angel at one time, can degenerate into pure evil, then the reader should realize that he or she can experience the same fate.

Evaluating Satan's appearance, actions, and emotions, the reader can begin to understand and sympathize with this unfortunate creature's falling. A beautiful archangel existed known as Lucifer, who had heroic attributes, who truly did mean well with his rebellion. Milton may not have intended to give Satan heroic attributes, but nonetheless what emerges from *Paradise Lost* is a poor creature that creates a personal hell and condemns himself to damnation. By appreciating Lucifer's heroism, and recognizing his ambitions as tragic flaws, one can view Satan in a sympathetic light. Future authors would identify with Milton's Satan and embrace his heroism in the early books, creating a Devil that they could appreciate and admire for his angelic wings, virtuous mind, and most importantly, his unconquerable will.



Chapter Four: The Emergence of the Fallen Hero

Examining Lucifer's fall in *Paradise Lost* illuminates the heroic qualities of his character. Lucifer's heroism encouraged Romantic writers to reinvent the Devil near the end of the eighteenth century. Exploring this time's societal beliefs, the Romantic Period's emergence, and William Blake's work demonstrates how Satan walked into the 1700's with his horns and hoofs and emerged in the early 1800's with his angelic wings and a virtuous mind that mirrored those of his new creators. Satan regained his dignity and characteristics as an archangel through the Romantic Period's events and individuals.

Societal beliefs of the late 1700's allowed Satan's character to change from that of a villain to that of a hero. Theology did not satisfy everyone's curiosity about the surrounding world; instead, science and philosophy began to be applied to practical situations to describe various circumstances. Science began conflicting with theology and demystified what people once explained with faith. Kenneth Bruffee explains in his dissertation that the Age of Reason began to overtake superstition, and people no longer believed everything they read from scripture (31). Society started to recognize the possibility of error throughout the Bible, but also religion started to become less prevalent due to its foundation in faith. Due to the shift toward rationalism near the end of the eighteenth century, people began to take not only God, but also the Devil, less seriously. Peter Schock states in his article, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: Blake's Myth of Satan and Its Cultural Matrix," that philosophical rationalism caused people no longer to fear eternal damnation (443-444). Satan became the pinnacle of evil because of theology's influence, but as people took religion less seriously, his demonic character

started to crumble. This shift in philosophical rationalism influenced the creation of a new, heroic Satan.

The French Revolution also reshaped Satan. Working class citizens began to oppose the royalty that they once served due to their belief in individual rights. In the mid-eighteenth century few individuals possessed political power in Europe. Marilyn Butler notes in *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* that in England, France, Spain, Prussia, and Austro-Hungary only a small percentage of individuals had inherited power (12). The small number of wealthy individuals in these countries caused a revolutionary stir amongst the poorer classes, who desired the same liberties that they saw their wealthy counterparts enjoying. Butler states that Europe's rising population in the 1760's encouraged individuals to raise their living standards (12). Increasing populations made it imperative for families to find a way to support each other and abolish the monarchy's tyranny, and authors encouraged this group to break free from Europe's corrupted policies.

Although this put the authors in grave danger, they continued to risk punishment, hoping to liberate thousands of minds. Graham Hough states in his book *The Romantic Poets* that the "liberal and secular influence of the French Revolution" motivated poets' work during the late eighteenth century (7). In an effort to unite the oppressed against royalty, a strong emphasis on individual rights and beliefs began to emerge. Hough also states that revolutionary writing persuaded individuals to look towards nature for justification of right and wrong (7). This philosophy for the oppressed during the French Revolution would become the template for a genre of writers. From the foundational beliefs of the late 1700's, an understanding of Satan's evolution into a hero began to take

shape. Theology could no longer justify itself without reason but had to provide itself with concrete arguments to satisfy the masses. These demands parallel Lucifer's rebellion against God in *Paradise Lost*. Therefore, since society no longer feared the Devil or eternal damnation, Satan in *Paradise Lost* could be viewed and critiqued as just another literary fictional character. The French Revolution played an imperative role in the resurrection of Satan's heroism because it embraced the "underdog," Satan, whose infamous reputation disappeared due to his courageousness.

The Romantics viewed Satan in this new light that appreciated his character. Evaluating Romantic Philosophy and the evolution of sublimity in the eighteenth century provides a better understanding of the heroic Satan's creation. Neil Forsyth defines Romanticism as the philosophical and aesthetic belief system of those who regarded the alliance of Prussia, Austro-Hungary, Russia, and the emerging British Empire as unholy (74). Liberal individuals, considered radicals of the time, embodied the newfound spirit of the late eighteenth century. Romantics valued the mind's sanctity and man's rediscovery of himself through nature: "Romanticism has less to do with man and his fellows, and more with the natural universe," states Graham Hough (8). The Romantic did not have to seek a higher power for counseling; rather, through seclusion he could understand his natural inclinations. Romantics believed that natural thoughts and ideas should guide the individual because Romanticism grasped individual power and the sublimity of the mind.

The evolution of sublimity through the course of the eighteenth century explains where Romantic Philosophy originated and also defines how Satan could be viewed as a hero. The individual became an important power in society, but this did not occur until

after the notion of sublimity evolved. Sublimity, which in this case refers to the elevation of one's thoughts, was frowned upon during the first third of the eighteenth century according to Kenneth Bruffee in his dissertation "Satan and the Sublime: The Meaning of The Romantic Hero" (53). However, Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, written in 1757, stirred new ideas about the topic. Romantic philosophy embraced sublimity, despite its infamous reputation, because it encouraged man to appreciate his personal feelings. According to Duncan Wu, editor of *Romanticism: An Anthology*, Burke's essay describes how individual experience can stir amazing sensations within oneself (7). Promoting the sensations which Burke promoted, the evolution of sublimity led to individual's cherishing their personal feelings and thoughts when stirred by their surroundings. These attitudes are what fueled Romantic philosophy and ultimately re-invented Satan as a fallen hero.

Knowing basic principles of Romantic Philosophy, which includes the newly defined sublimity, society became accepting of a new Satan. The model for the new Satan emerged from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* because Milton's Satan embodied admirable traits of the Romantic period.

Earlier writers may have empathized with Satan in Milton's story, but the first writer who viewed Satan as the true hero of *Paradise Lost* was William Blake. Blake (1757-1812) encompassed Romantic Philosophy in his work as passion, sublimity, and rebellion. Bruffee cites that Blake despised organized religion, questioned the validity of theology, and believed in Satan's rationale for rebelling against God (129). Blake did so because he believed that religion oppressed too many individuals and encouraged corruption. According to *The Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era 1760-1850*, Blake

opposed institutions and thought organized religion was the source of all cruelty (94). By creating a new type of Satan in his poem, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake reveals that he believes the energy that Milton's Satan shows is admirable. According to Peter Schock, author of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: Blake's Myth of Satan and its Cultural Matrix," Blake created a new Satan because he believed that Christianity distorted the original story of his character and therefore he had the liberty to remake the Devil as he saw fit (446). Blake had a unique outlook on religion, which differed from that of other Romantics; however he still is credited for making Satan *Paradise Lost's* hero. After Blake, the Romantics began to rebuild the demystified creature into a being that fit the morals of their own time.

Taking into consideration the societal beliefs of the late eighteenth century, the principles of Romantic Philosophy, and the origins of Satan as the hero of *Paradise Lost*, the character's emergence as a fallen hero can be better understood: "The Romantics thought themselves easily into Satan's consciousness," states Neil Forsyth, author of *The Satanic Epic*, "and many of them identified with him as an eloquent revolutionary" (281). Similar to Satan facing oppression in *Paradise Lost*, Romantics felt the necessity to fight against Europe's ruling power through their individual beliefs. Satan led a new way of thinking which relied on rational justification for one's actions and did not rely on faith in God. He starved for concrete reasoning that could be rationalized in his own mind, and like Satan, the Romantics craved the same validation. Romantics would easily relate to the Devil because they also faced unconquerable odds against the monarchy.

The Romantics also admired the traits that Satan shows in specific passages of *Paradise Lost*. S. Musgrove notes in his article, "Is the Devil an Ass?" that the Romantic

Satan mostly comes from the first two books of the poem (304). Satan awes the Romantic reader with his perseverance and determination so much in the beginning of the poem that they can not see the Devil as the pinnacle of evil. To the Romantics, Satan's constant pursuit of liberty and determination to conquer overwhelming odds make him heroic, as argued by John Steadman in "The Idea of Satan as the Hero of 'Paradise Lost'" (260). Eighteenth-century writers admired Satan's defiance and compared his attempt to overcome God with the Romantic confrontation with organized institutions. Satan became the model for various actions in the late 1700's and early 1800's as writers related to his rebellion with God. Satan began to be associated less with evil and more with being virtuous and heroic. Steadman notes, "English writers in the Romantic Period develop Satan into a symbol with a broad range of functions including rebellion, unconventional politics, and religious values" (441). Writers, who wanted a courageous hero to oppose high authority, now had it in the Devil.

The sublimity which Satan shows in *Paradise Lost* also made writers especially admire his character. According to Christianity, Satan became the first character to ever oppose God's will, and before the eighteenth century, this would have been a criticized as a terrible act. However, due to the evolution of sublimity, Romantics not only tolerated this rebellion, they admired it. Steadman notes how Satan in *Paradise Lost* became associated with the sublime because of his ideas of "great magnitude" (260). Satan desired to rule Heaven, an idea never previously considered, because he reasoned that he would be more fitting to rule than the tyrannous God. Romantics admired his revolutionary thinking, and thus Satan reemerged as a hero.

Romantics also admired Milton's Satan's sublimity as he made the mind virtuous and divine. Satan declared in *Paradise Lost* "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven" (I.254-255). He believed that God could be made irrelevant by focusing on the positive, alleviating the pain of any circumstance. Satan, who was thrown from heaven, had to try to make the most of his unfortunate fate in hell and did so quite easily in Books I and II of *Paradise Lost* because of God's absence. It is Satan's ability to make good from these difficult circumstances that Romantic writers loved. His ability to create an internal paradise with God absent made him admirable.

Although Milton may not have intended to make Satan a hero in *Paradise Lost*, Romantic writers were able to glamorize the character into someone that they admired dearly. The circumstances of the late eighteenth century called for a character who opposed unjust rule. Satan emerged as that hero, who stood for opposing tyranny and refuting oppression. Satan's sublimity in *Paradise Lost* made him an admirable hero and stripped him of his title, "Prince of Darkness." Eighteenth-century societal movements and Romantic individuals are the influences that created a heroic Satan in English Literature.

Chapter Five: Lord Byron's Influence

George "Lord" Byron (1788-1824) embodied the spirit of Romanticism and highlighted Satan's heroic traits from *Paradise Lost*. Byron, according to Graham Hough, is considered the greatest English poet after Shakespeare, but also created much controversy for his radical writing and "satanic" thoughts during his lifetime (98). Byron was influenced to change Milton's Satan into a hero by his early years' experience, his political opposition, and his literary writings.

Byron's surroundings during his early life strongly influenced his work. He grew up in a house of God but despised organized religion because of his nurse, Mary Gray, who tormented him. Larry Bruner noted that not only did she hold strict order in his religious teachings, which made Byron despise religion, she also forced him to engage in "sexplay," demonstrating to Byron the underlying hypocrisy in religion (17).

Recognizing his nurse's hypocrisy, Byron formulated his own religious beliefs:

"Developing a profound dislike of most traditional religious observations," Bruner notes, "[Byron] nevertheless remained acutely aware of a personal need for a firm religion" (17). Byron's critical evaluation performed at an early age explains how the future author could empathize with Milton's Satan. The unfortunate events which occurred in Byron's early life became a catalyst for his future writing and revolutionary style.

Byron's early life created his critical view of organized institutions such as religion and government. Edward Bosteller describes in *Byron and the Politics of Paradise* that Byron did not accept any form of authority as inherently supreme (76). Byron questioned the inherent power of government and compared its shortcomings with

those of God. Bosteller points out that Byron believed God stood for the tyranny of a social and political hierarchy that justifies its acts by divine authority (574). To critique such ideas, Byron used his fictional characters as vehicles to embody Romantic philosophy and enlightened thinking and questioned the idea of inherent power.

Byron understood the Government's claim to inherent power as paralleling this idea of God. The courageous Byron began to pursue individual rights for his fellow Europeans due to his frustration with the monarchy's power over its citizens. Byron gave three speeches to the House of Lords, all standing for personal liberty, as noted by Dino Franco Felluga (73). Recognizing the individual's mind as a divine force, Byron embodied the Romantic Philosophy that emphasized all individuals' rights. As Byron's notoriety increased, he became more of a threat to the political norm.

Byron's critics began recognizing the threat as his public support grew. Felluga notes that in Byron's late teens and early twenties his critics became concerned that his ideas of personal liberty would lead to a rebellion (83). Byron compromised his life's well-being by sharing his revolutionary thoughts about the unjust power that religion and government held. Heroically, Byron preferred to oppose corrupt rule, risking severe penalty, rather than submit to tyranny. His beliefs gained wide support, encouraging citizens to welcome an individual who would oppose unconquerable odds in supporting institutional changes that embraced personal liberties.

Romantic writers of the time pushed the patience of the authorities in their appeal to the individual's rights. However, Byron's superb writing is what made him even more threatening than his peers. His work paralleled Milton's because of his fascination with good and evil. Dino Franco Felluga notes that Byron's work became associated with

Milton and made Byron appear dangerous and immoral (81). Critics of his work did not hesitate to try to condemn him for his actions. Felluga notes that one critic, who particularly despised Byron's writing declared, "[Byron's] verse, like the serpent's eye allures virtue only to destroy it" (83). Byron's radical thoughts offended those with conventional ideas in the early nineteenth century, but he also appealed to those looking for inspiration for a revolution.

Byron's ability to relate to the culture of his time made him an effective writer for social reform. In fact, Byron sold his personal property in order to avoid a royal lifestyle (Felluga 88). His revolutionary writing became popular with those searching for a change from the inherited power that had ruled for hundreds of years. He attempted, says Felluga, to separate the reader's mind from societal conventions (71). Byron embodied Romanticism in his characters, paralleling Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Critics despised this writing because his texts introduced society to a new way of thinking that benefited the lower classes. Byron's characters parallel Milton's Satan in their quest for personal liberty and their search for truth in the world, leading them to question certain political policies. Despite the criticism, Byron's stories still appealed to the masses. For example, the first edition of *Childe Harold*, the story that made Byron famous, sold out when it first became available (Felluga 88). He easily appealed to the masses because of his elegant writing and revolutionary thinking. He encouraged individuals to grasp their personal morals as absolutes and disregard the exterior influences which had oppressed society for years. "Byron does not look to nature to find in it some spiritual essence that is actually there," claims Graham Hough, "he looks to it to echo and include his own passions" (106). Byron embraced the Romantic Philosophy and wanted others to

discover that, by looking within themselves, they too could find internal liberty that authority had no control over.

As Byron aged, his work gained popularity. While some remained critical of his characters, others embraced their unusual attributes. Between the years 1812-1814 the term “Byronic Hero” developed, notes Hough, which refers to dark, beautiful, and blighted characters that were created in Byron’s literature (104). Instead of fearing these individuals, as society would have during Milton’s time in the mid-seventeenth century, people began to recognize the heroic traits of these misunderstood characters. In 1820, Byron unveiled his interpretation of Milton’s Satan in *Cain: A Mystery*, presenting a Lucifer who had achieved personal liberty. In this text, Satan returns to his angelic form, similar to that seen in the first few books of *Paradise Lost*, with rediscovered confidence and rationalism bestowed upon him from the new Romantic Philosophy not existent during Milton’s time. Byron brings these ideas, philosophies, and attitudes into the text and presents Satan as a fallen hero of English Literature. The life and times of Lord Byron reveal the motives for creating Satan as a fallen hero of English Literature. The religious hypocrisy that Byron experienced as a youth led him to his critical attitude toward all accepted institutional systems, motivating him to embody the Romantic Philosophy. He represents all philosophers who ever sided with Satan in his rebellion against heaven and believed that he had a legitimate case against God. Looking into his texts, one can begin to easily relate to the Devil and place him as a hero in English Literature.

Chapter Six: A Hero Reborn

Understanding how Satan developed as a hero of English Literature surfaces by studying the literary character topologically. Romantic Philosophy, the French Revolution, and the events of Byron's life produced a fertile soil in which Satan could sprout and once again show his archangelic self. Studying Byron's *Cain: A Mystery* the reader can analyze the Devil from a Romantic perspective and view him heroically. Although the text originally created much controversy in 1821, Byron's text showed the Devil in an unfamiliar light that embraced his admirable traits. Recognizing the Devil's heroic qualities throughout Byron's text reminds the reader of Satan from *Paradise Lost's* early books by highlighting his returned confidence and rationality. In *Cain: A Mystery*, Lucifer creates a paradise within himself without God by embracing the sanctity of the mind. Being able to create a paradise within, Lucifer becomes a character that Byron's reader's can easily respect and recreate the fallen hero from the depths of hell into the angelic self that once again can be admired.

Like citizens from different countries in Europe during the French Revolution, Cain represents the restless minds of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Leonard Michaels points out in his article "Byron's Cain," that "Cain can be interpreted as the tragedy of the intellectual rebel who attempts to defy and break free from traditional faith" (71). Byron's story begins where Milton's *Paradise Lost* leaves off, depicting the tragedy of Cain and Abel. Cain, who is struggling to understand God's way and his parents' obedience, is battling his restless mind's dissatisfaction with policy. To help quench Cain's questions, Lucifer emerges in the land without Paradise and attempts to persuade the son of Adam and Eve that he is not the first one to have such difficulties

with obedience. Lucifer presents his argument to Cain and through that persuasion also speaks to the reader. He creates a rational case for himself being a hero for man by criticizing God and also embracing knowledge.

Lucifer is as bold as he is determined, in his case against God. Unlike Milton's Satan, who loses his rebellion's original purpose due to his own self-pity, Byron's Lucifer has a well-thought-out argument against God. When first meeting Cain, Lucifer is quick to share that God's ways do not always seem correct. When Cain asks Lucifer if he is responsible for his parent's eating from the forbidden "Tree of Knowledge," Lucifer calmly replies, "Did I plant things prohibited within the reach of beings innocent and curious by their own innocence?" (I.I). Adam and Eve never asked this question because it was their lord whom they worshipped that put the tree in Eden; however, since Lucifer refuses to yield to God, he is able to be more critical of God's action. He asks Cain to appeal to his senses and decide if God should have put the forbidden fruit in reach of his parents if he had no intention of their eating from the tree.

Lucifer also questions God's intent in creating man. Cain, who is sad that the elements of nature may someday die, questions his new acquaintance why God would create such beautiful things. Lucifer replies, "He makes but to destroy" (I.I). Like the tree's location, the creation of man seems puzzling to the sensible mind. Although God claims humans as his prized creation, someday every person will pass away as if they never existed and with their death will come a loss of beauty in the world. Not able to understand God's ways, Lucifer does not please God by optimistically labeling his actions as creation, but instead views them as destruction because of the ultimate fate of all individuals. In *Cain: A Mystery*, Lucifer is standing up for the right of man to live

eternally and experience the world around him without the fear of boundaries or punishment. Lucifer's courage in questioning God's actions is heroic because it is a sensible argument that only the archangel is willing to ask for both for himself and mankind.

Lucifer's argument against God is also heroic because of his reluctance to yield. Although God won the battle for Heaven in *Paradise Lost*, Lucifer now is focused and eager to create a new Paradise built upon the sanctity of the mind. He informs Cain in their first meeting, "I have a victor-true; but no superior" (I.II). It is evident that Lucifer is willing to forfeit his battle for heaven to God, but he refuses to end his rebellion. Lucifer is now focused on making a new paradise away from God and his comments show how to be successful in pursuing this cause. Although in *Paradise Lost* the reader is left to believe that the key to happiness is obedience, Byron's Lucifer shows otherwise. He informs Cain, "Homage he has from all- but none from me" (I.II). Lucifer's seductive words present a strong argument against God which also radiates confidence despite opposing the supreme power. Larry Brunner, author of *Dramatic Speculation and the Quest for Faith in Lord Byron's Cain*, notes, "In his pride, Lucifer claims he has won complete freedom" (37). Examining the historical context of *Cain: A Mystery*, the reader recognizes that Satan's freedom is what thousands have strived to achieve. He represents hope that, even against unconquerable odds, there is still hope to achieve happiness without being obedient to a more powerful monarchy. Byron's Lucifer begins to show that God is unnecessary in order for one to achieve happiness because God's actions do not always seem correct to the sensible mind.

His critical evaluation of God also illuminates Lucifer's most heroic trait: his rational thinking. Lucifer exemplifies the power of the individual when they process their own thoughts and models the divinity of the mind that Romantic Philosophy cherished. In Byron's text, Lucifer displays this ability in two ways, by distinguishing good from evil and also recognizing the importance of knowledge.

Lucifer demonstrates how good and evil are falsely distinguished upon the originator of their action. He argues that his work is viewed as evil while God's work will always be viewed as good. Lucifer explains to Cain, "Evil and good are things in their own essence, and not made good or evil by the giver..." (II.II). If one is to think in this way, the Devil's actions do not seem any more evil than God's in *Paradise Lost*. For instance, although Satan tempts Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge in Milton's text, one can be more critical of God's decision to plant the tree in the first place. Byron is using Lucifer to demonstrate the bias that characters face due to their reputation, and since the Devil is known as God's opposition, he faces much scrutiny.

Lucifer also presents how irrational it is for one to desire evil. Despite Satan's infamous reputation, Milton's *Paradise Lost* exposes the Devil in a new light. The reader is introduced to a Satan whose actions do not originate from evil intents, but rather from rational thoughts and a quest for considered decisions. Although the Devil's original mission became distorted in the course of the poem, Milton's reader can not disregard the fact that Satan's actions did not originate from evil but from dissatisfaction with authority and an unwillingness to abide by tyranny. In Byron's text, Lucifer reminds the reader, "Who covets evil for its own bitter sake?" (II.II), demonstrating that his reputation originates from questioning God, who convinces his followers that those who question

him are evil. Lucifer tells Cain, “Were I the victor, his works would be deem’d the only evil ones” (II.II). Lucifer demonstrates that good and evil should not be determined based on who defines them but rather by reason alone; otherwise reputations obstruct the truth. He also is a model of how one should be confident in one’s own decision making, not obedient to supreme authority. Lucifer’s ability to think independently and his philosophy on differentiating good and evil are heroic because he demonstrates how one should be confident in one’s own decision-making.

Lucifer constructs a persuasive argument against God because he values knowledge and truth. By listening to Byron’s Lucifer, the reader discovers the power that one can possess when embracing the truth. He informs Cain, “And I, who knows all things, fear nothing...” (I.I). Like the Satan from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Lucifer believes that he has lifted obedience’s yoke and has discovered power in knowledge. By doing so, he displays confidence, courage, and sublimity. Larry Brunner notes that Lucifer’s desires focus around himself as a, “righter of wrongs, spokesman of freedom, and friend of man” (46). Unlike Milton’s Satan, Lucifer in *Cain: A Mystery* desires to help others discover the power within themselves instead of searching for external assistance and approval.

Lucifer therefore suggests that one draw from the power of truth and knowledge. He tells Cain, “Truth in its own essence cannot be but good” (I.I). Satan’s exuberant confidence and rationale seduces not only Cain but the reader so that they can also share his strength and independence. This Lucifer appealed not only to Byron’s audience in the mid-nineteenth century, but continues to appeal to the reader today. It encourages one not to be satisfied with unreasonable policies, unanswered questions, and most

importantly, irrational thinking: “Your reason-” Lucifer reminds Cain, “let it not be
oversway’d by tyrannous threats to force you into faith” (II.II). Byron is using Lucifer’s
restored credibility from the late eighteenth-century Romanticism movement to
encourage others to strive for social justice and personal liberty. By doing so, he has
shown the reader the power of the mind and how one can form a paradise within
themselves without including God. Lucifer, in his departure, encourages Cain to “Think
and endure- and form an inner world within your own bosom- where the outwards fails,
so shall you nearer be the spiritual nature, and war triumphant with your own” (II.II).
Examining Lucifer’s statements to Cain and their historical context, a heroic Devil begins
to emerge for the reader. He no longer represents fire and brimstone, but rather
enlightened thinking and individual power as much for the nineteenth-century reader as
for the reader today.

Thus in Byron’s text, Lucifer is associated with heroic traits such as confidence
and sublimity. He displays a sense of satisfaction and happiness that stimulates the
reader to follow a path of enlightenment similar to his own. Most importantly, Lucifer is
a hero in Byron’s text because he dares to think for himself despite knowing the
unconquerable odds that he would have to overcome to be successful. Unlike Milton’s
Satan, who displays heroic traits in the earlier books of *Paradise Lost*, Lucifer sustains
his heroism and also reflects on how successful he has been despite traveling a path that
no other individual has dared to take in the past. By venturing this trail Lucifer has
demonstrated how one can create a paradise within without including God, which up until
the Romantic period would have been declared heresy. However, due to Romantics such
as Byron, Lucifer not only can be portrayed as successful in his quest to separate from

God, but can also be viewed as a hero who overcame nearly impossible odds to discover happiness by cherishing the sanctity of the mind. He becomes a character that the reader can admire because he encourages everyone to embrace his or her individual power and form a personal heaven, with or without God.

Conclusion

No character's reputation compares to that of Satan's. Not only has he been associated with evil, but the actions that he chose to commit are what society has defined to be evil itself. Considering the historical context that has been built up against the Devil, it would be difficult to conceive the idea that Satan would ever be able to resurrect himself. Thus Satan is a fallen hero of English Literature- someone whose heroic traits became concealed by a cloak of myth and legend. Instead of being known as Lucifer, the angel who wanted justification, he became known as the Devil, the one who rebelled against God. Yet if we cast aside religious bias based on Satan's opposition to God, a literary character emerges who shows admirable attributes that anyone can appreciate.

The Romantic Satan is a character who desires answers to questions that seem natural for men and women to ask. Recognizing this similarity between the figure of



Satan and human beings generally, we realize that the central question is not, "What did Satan do wrong?" but, "what would I have done differently?" By answering this question—the central focus of this thesis--an individual identifies themselves with the Devil and, while one may not feel sympathy for Satan, one's actions and choices will need to be examined in a new light.

Recognizing this, one can give the Devil his due, providing Lucifer the opportunity to rid of himself of the horns and hooves that he has grown over the centuries and allowing him to spread his angelic wings one more time in his virtuous, near-divine form. We see Satan's unconquerable will and unquenchable mind, which make him someone not much different from us and a hero of English Literature.

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