Darkness Visible: A Consideration Of The Diabolic Image In The Paradigmatic Conflict Between Good And Evil

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A Consideration of the Diabolic Image
in the Paradigmatic Conflict
Between Good and Evil

C. Justin Romano

Respectfully submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of English.

Seton Hall University
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Approved by

[Signature]
Mentor

[Signature]
Second Reader
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To them I humbly dedicate this attempt to make the "darkness visible."

CJR
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DARKNESS VISIBLE:
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in the Paradigmatic Conflict
Between Good and Evil
What is Light, without Darkness?

- William Hjortsberg
Distinct the heart's exchange
with its own dark mirror,
for deep in that Well of Truth
trembles one pale star;
ironic, infernal beacon,
graceful torch of the Devil,
our solace and sole glory -
consciousness in Evil!

- Charles Baudelaire

In *The Club Dumas*, Arturo Perez-Reverte presents the following description of the Devil:

She was wearing a blue duffel coat and carried a pile of books under her arm. Her chestnut hair was cut short, like a boy's. She sat at a slight distance, not quite a part of the group...It was impossible to forget her [green] eyes. In contrast to her tanned face, their color was so light, it was almost transparent. A slender, supple girl, one could tell she spent a lot of time outdoors...And I noticed another thing about her: she wore no rings, no watch, no earrings. Her ears weren't pierced.  (Perez-Reverte 98-9)

At first perusal, this seems like so much nonsense - an artistic liberty of the most extreme type - but a more careful examination reveals that Mr. Perez-Reverte's Devil, while certainly iconoclastic, is in fact not a character within a vacuum, unique unto itself, but a cleverly and carefully designed extension of precursory diabolic representations. It is these earlier images of the Devil, particularly with respect to how the many manipulations of the
character over the centuries might indeed merge to produce a modern Devil very similar to that of Perez-Reverte's novel, which will be examined in this work.

Before embarking, however, it is necessary to better define the parameters of this endeavor. The Devil comes into existence as a direct result of man's need to make the intangible concept of Evil more comprehensible by binding it to a definite form, and as such he is a paradoxical character, at once the source and representation of that Evil. It is with the representational role of the Devil that this work is chiefly concerned, for therein lies the concrete evidence of the character's fluid, malleable nature; a nature which, over time, shows itself to exist in a profound tension with the very tenets of the binary paradigm of Good and Evil it was created to uphold.

The principles which will govern this dualism are forged in Medieval Europe. With Western Civilization adopting a deocentric universe where God was the measure of all things, the existence of Evil required an explanation which did not impugn the omnibenevolent Deity as the source of an agent harmful to his creations. Towards this end, the Church Fathers, working from sources in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, developed the myth of Lucifer, the first-created and brightest of angels, who fell from Heavenly grace into Hellish damnation through a self-perpetuated sin of Pride. In order to demonstrate through Lucifer the distinct differences between Good and Evil, a strong emphasis was placed upon the fallen angel's isolation from his former nature, first by literally removing Lucifer from the proximity of Heaven by casting him into a pit at the far end of the cosmos, and second by radically altering his appearance. As he writhes in Hell, Lucifer finds the perfection of his being shatteringly reduced to a physically monstrous demon-form whose topical imperfections reflect the internalized qualities of his Evil. It is these two traits, physical isolation and physical monstrosity, that merge to form the basis of the Medieval image that would grow to become the standard of iconography for the Devil as one pole in the eternal binary of Good and Evil.
This representation of the Devil as a cosmic foil to the Christian Deity - a well-spring for all Evil just as God was the fount of all Good - was pervasive in Medieval literature, but finds its apex in the Inferno of Dante Alighieri and its splendidly detailed, evocative rendition of Lucifer as a static, impotent, monstrous, muted Devil who is a hideous inversion of the omnipotent, ethereal, and logos-bearing Trinitarian God. Not all works of the Middle Ages, however, dealt with the Devil as the cosmically polarized incarnation so immortalized by Dante. Both the Bible and the Mystery Plays, particularly the Chester Cycle, while dramatizing the events of Lucifer's Fall, brought a human element into contact with the diabolic by also examining the Serpent-induced corruption of Man in the Garden of Eden.

With this direct interaction of man and Devil came an attendant necessity to define the presence of Evil not only in some distant, darkly ineffable figure such as Lucifer, but also within the human sphere of existence. The result was the Medieval development of the Satanic embodiment, an Earthly extension of the Hell-bound Devil commonly termed a "monster." In an effort to polarize men and monsters as they had God and the Devil, Medieval Satanic embodiments were characterized as inhuman through gross physical deformity, marginal isolation from human society, and a marked inability to behave in accord with "civilized" standards. Such monsters are best represented by the Anglo-Saxon poem Beowulf, which pits an unholy trio of Satanic embodiments -- Grendel, his water-hag dam, and the barrow dragon -- against the Geatish warrior-prince, Beowulf. in a

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1 For the purposes of this work, the term "Satanic embodiment" may be broadly understood to refer to any of the Earthly fiends, be they monsters, as in Beowulf, or men, as in Othello, which exhibit expressly diabolic traits. Likewise, the term "Satanic incarnation" will be employed solely in reference to the character of Satan himself; that is, the cosmic Prince of Darkness, as he appears, for example, in Dante's Inferno or Milton's Paradise Lost.

2 Characters such as Beowulf, who are Earthly opponents of the Satanic embodiments, are referred to throughout the work as "Deific embodiments."
work that explores the nature of the Satanic embodiment as necessarily distant from, yet intricately bound to human society.

Both of these Medieval standards of representation, that of the incarnate Devil and that of the Satanic embodiment, are explored and elaborated in the first Chapter of this work in an attempt to establish thoroughly the diabolic tradition. The remainder of the study then involves itself with an examination of the various literary challenges posed to this tradition. The second Chapter will follow the Medieval roots of the cosmically incarnated Devil into the Renaissance, where they will find themselves unearthed at the hands of Satan in John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Milton's reification of the Devil, which finds its source in the Anglo-Saxon work *Genesis B*, greatly disrupts the traditional image of the Devil by creating Satan as a figure rich in echoes of the Classical epics who is characterized not by his defeat, but by his unwillingness to even view himself as defeated. This Satanic volition to continue waging an ultimately futile war against God elevates Satan above the prostrated postures of his precursors, but it is the poem's disruption of the binary between Good and Evil by permitting the formerly Divine *logos* of enlightened, rational intellect to become a tool of the Devil which creates an unspannable representational gulf between Milton's Satan and the Medieval standards. Satan employs this perjured *logos* and its chief vehicle, language, to gain his diabolical ends in the Garden of Eden, thus blurring the clear polarities of the Medieval tradition by bending the Word to evil, and though, in the end, the poem purports to support the tenets of the established tradition, Satan's heroic refusal to acknowledge his damnation rears above all textual attempts to constrain it and continues to disintegrate not only the standards of diabolic representation, but the very essence of the poem itself.

Having thus reached the zenith of literature's Satanic incarnations with *Paradise Lost*, the third Chapter turns the focus of Milton's disruptive equation between intellect, will, language, and the Devil, upon the human sphere's Satanic embodiment as it is represented in the works of William Shakespeare. Juxtaposing *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, and
Othello, the chapter traces the development of Shakespearean Evil from such traditionally Medieval figures as "monster" (Tem.II.ii.102) Caliban, through its transitional phase in the "devilish" (Mac.IV.iii.117) Macbeth, to its pinnacle in the hyper-rational exhibition of what Baudelaire aptly termed "consciousness in Evil" (126) in the ultimately fiendish Iago. Othello's Ensign provides Shakespeare's most powerful deconstruction of the standard representation of the Satanic embodiment. Iago bears no trace of physical monstrosity, the traditional designation of a polluted nature, and his linguistic treachery, like the verbal temptations voiced by Milton's Satan, is a subtle corruption of the logos that provides the means to his destruction of the Moor's sanity and life.

The most striking aspect of Shakespeare's challenge to traditional representations in Othello, however, is not his treatment of Iago, but the complete binary inversion to which he subjects the dualism of Good and Evil. Rather than blending the Deific and the Satanic, as was the case in Paradise Lost, Shakespeare actually inverts the representations of the system's poles. The movement of Evil into the super-intellectual Iago is paralleled by the reduction of the Deific qualities into Othello. According to Medieval standards, the Moorish General is a figure who, based upon his black skin alone, should be associated with Evil monstrosity, and yet, in the subverted paradigm of the play, the physically marginal Moor stands as a champion of Christianity against the diabolic evil masked behind Iago's "plain face" (Oth.II.i.321). Though Othello comports himself valiantly in his role as Deific embodiment, he proves in the end to be no match for Iago, whose villainy pierces the facade of Othello's seeming victory and continues to belie the play's attempts to restore traditional values even after the Ensign himself has fallen silent.

After Othello, no Satanic embodiment equaling or surpassing Iago's disruptive powers will appear until the American Renaissance of the nineteenth century, when Shakespeare's trope of binary inversion merges with the Miltonic convention of the Satanic will to produce Herman Melville's Moby Dick. The novel's antagonists, Captain Ahab and the White Whale, provide the main focus for the fourth Chapter of this work,
which emphasizes the particularly American aspects of these Satanic and Deific embodiments by developing their representations in terms of the Transcendental vision of Evil. This vision appears in the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose diabolic characters combined aspects of the Medieval standard and its Renaissance embellishments with elements of Emersonian philosophy to create some of the earliest sketches of the Transcendental Satanic embodiment.

As influential as the writings of Poe and Hawthorne were on Melville's own designs, however, Captain Ahab is quickly shown to depart from even their standard. Fired by a will that is purely Satanic, gifted with a Iagian ability to govern language, and vested with a grandly Epic level of defiance, Melville's crippled Captain rolls towards his nemesis, Moby Dick, the White Whale which represents the binary inversion previously seen in Othello in its most profound form. Melville's tale elevates its Satanic embodiment to Promethean heights while at the same time debasing the Deific embodiment to reside in the form of a "dumb brute" (Melville 144). Though Moby Dick, like its Miltonic and Shakespearean precursors, ultimately attempts to reinforce the traditional reading of the binary between Good and Evil, it too fails at this task. Ahab's monomanic refusal to relinquish his pledge to vengeance allows him to transcend the tenets of the text and his unyielding testament to his Satanic selfhood propels Moby Dick to its status as "the darker half of our national epic" (Bloom 11).

Out of these waters of Melville's novel, the discussion of the diabolic draws to its conclusion. Having established through its textual forays at least the pattern of representational inversions that has allowed previous images of the Devil to challenge the strictures of the standard tradition, the work will raise its attentions from the past once more to the present. The circle closes by returning to the work of Perez-Reverte and briefly examining the ways in which the Devil of The Club Dumas both builds upon and expands the diabolic character's established ability to break-down textual systems in hopes of demonstrating that the disruptive tendencies of literary incarnations of the Devil
continue to pose a challenge to our perceptions and representational standards even in this apparently value-deficient wasteland of the impending millennium.

A final word. Surveying these texts brings to the surface many questions about the appearances of Good and Evil, questions that require examination, if not answers. As a culture and a society, Western man has registered great advances over the past two-thousand years, but in many ways we still remain strangely static. Like our ancestors before us, we possess a need for a defined Evil, that through it we might better gain an understanding of what is Good. Paradigms, as this work hopes to demonstrate, shift. If we do not recognize these shifts, we risk losing our coherence as a society by becoming blind to the perspective from which we should read right and wrong. Therefore, in the interest of furthering the definition of the Light, let us step away into the Darkness, and give the Devil his due.
O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle,  
Now artow Sathanas, that mayst nat twyne  
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

- Geoffrey Chaucer  
  The Monk's Tale

The traditional perception of the Devil was best and most richly established in a flourish of religiocentric art and literature during the Middle Age of Europe. The specific characteristics of this diabolic image emphasized physical isolation and an overt, often exaggerated monstrosity of form, while downplaying to the point of virtual negation any linkages between the Devil and the faculties of higher intellect, thus following a well-documented pattern of Medieval representation by moulding the incarnation of Evil as an almost perfectly polar opponent to the accepted icon of Good, the patriarchal, logos-bearing, Judeo-Christian God. The archetype for this Medieval Devil rests in the Holy Scriptures, specifically in the Old Testament books of Genesis and Isaiah, and the New Testament account of the book of Revelation, and it is to these texts that we must first turn our attention, for it is through an amalgamation of these sources that Medieval writers would create the image and character of the Devil that would exist as the standard of representation for centuries to come.

The genesis of this representation of the Devil is somewhat complicated. The prophet Isaiah relates how Lucifer, first among God's angels, attempts to glorify himself above even his Creator, writing:
How art thou fallen from Heaven.
O Lucifer, son of the morning...
For thou hast said in thine heart,
"I will ascend into Heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:....
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will be like the most High."  (Isaiah 14:12-14)

This passage marks the first recorded appearance of the name Lucifer as a reference to the Devil. Lucifer is derived from the Hebrew *Helel*, a word meaning "shining one" which refers to either the sun itself, or the planet Venus. Greek translators of the Hebrew Scriptures, as Neil Forsyth notes in his detailed study of the Devil, *The Old Enemy*, sided with the planet over the star, rendering *Helel* into *Heosphores* in an "astronomical identification with Hesiod's...son of Heos, the dawn-bringer, Venus" (Forsyth 136). The Greek, in turn, was transformed into the vulgate *Lucifer*, or "light-bearer," and has remained the standard name of the Devil before, and sometimes after, his fall from Heaven.

This fall, according to Isaiah, results from Lucifer's impious aspiration. Such an interpretation makes the "light-bearer" a clear figure of Pride, that fault labeled first among the Seven Deadly Sins. Ironically, because it involves an assertion of volition, the sin of Pride may be understood as a function of intellect, of a somewhat developed intellect, in fact, but the Medieval writers chose to relate and emphasize only the theological implications of Lucifer's hubris, and hence the Medieval focus with respect to the entrance of Evil upon the stage of the universe rests on the consequences of Lucifer's act, and not on the act itself. Commenting on these consequences, Isaiah warns: "...thou shalt be brought down to Hell, / To the sides of the Pit" (Isaiah 14:15), a motion which references the fall of Lucifer from the majestical perfection of Heaven to the infernal abominations of
Hell as punishment for his transgression against the divinity of God. Later, the book of *Revelation* provided a second, more cosmic reading of this same event:

And [the dragon's] tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth...And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not...And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

(*Revelation* 12:4; 7-9)

Here the Devil is figured as a dragon, a gargantuan serpent whose monstrosity of shape echoes the perversion of his angelic nature as a result of his sin, and his defeat, prefigured in a second of Isaiah's visions,

In that day, Yahweh will punish
with his hard and great and strong sword
Leviathan, the twisting serpent,
Leviathan, the crooked serpent,
and he will slay the dragon in the sea  (*Isaiah* 27:1),

becomes a thing of epic proportions, with hosts of angels striving against each other, the renegade factions ultimately to fail, and to fall.

While locating the origins of the Devil in the rebellious corruption of an angelic nature at first seems monstrously perverse, one finds that it actually suited the greater purposes of the Church quite nicely because it offered a necessary tangibility to an ultimately abstract concept. Luther Link cites Origen, who commented on this matter: "No one can know the origin of evil...who has not grasped the truth about the so-called Devil and his angels, and who he was before he became a Devil and how he became a Devil" (*Link* 23). The need to develop a concrete, credible origin for the Devil, Link continues, stemmed from a need to justify the existence of Evil in a universe whose every
particle was believed to have been created Good by an omnibenevolent God. It was Augustine, writing in the fifth-century, who provided the first satisfactory interpretation of the fall of the rebel angels and the birth of the Devil in his treatise *The City of God*. As with all things moulded by the Divine hand, he writes, the angels were born "to live in wisdom and happiness. Some angels, however, turned away from this illumination" (Link 25). In light of this interpretation, the passage in *Isaiah*, representing the Devil as a powerful Babylonian prince, and that in *Revelation* depicting him as the dragon, both serve to indicate that "the Devil was for a time without sin" (Link 25), thus providing what is at once a firm reply to the question of the origins of Evil and the germ of a visceral image in which to confine those origins.

Following in Augustine's footsteps, Gregory the Great and Isidore de Seville took up the banner of this perception of the Devil and embellished it to evolve the image and history which "became standard in the Middle Ages" (Russell 94). Pope Gregory's influential diabolology determined that "of all beings [Lucifer] was the first to be created. He was a cherub, the highest of all the angels, and he could have remained at the pinnacle of creation had he not chosen to sin" (94). His proud transgression effected, however, Lucifer was condemned to plunge "as far down into the depths as he had once stood high in heaven" (94). Thus expelled, Lucifer the angel continues the demonic transformation initiated in his moment of hubris and becomes, as per *Revelation*, Satan.

Like Lucifer, the name Satan is rooted in the Hebrew. *Sān* is a term meaning "opponent" (Forsyth 4), and it is from this root that Medieval scholars derived their definition of Satan in his purest, most reduced sense, as Adversary of the Judeo-Christian God.¹ The Devil's name, then, implies the essence of his existence, and the Medieval

¹ In the book of *Job*, *ha-Satan*, "the Adversary," seems to be more an antagonist of man than God. However, the very challenging of God over Job's faith makes Satan as much an opponent of the Deity as an enemy of man.
tradition, formed in the writings of Augustine, Gregory and Isidore, and fomented in such works as Dante's *Inferno* and the English Cycle Dramas, would carry this oppositional aspect to its utmost by creating the Devil as a character who embodied in every sense possible all that Medieval man considered Evil.

They would begin with appearances.

In something of an homage to the pervasiveness of folklore in Medieval Europe, the Devil was often incarnated as an animal. Jeffrey Russell notes that such bestial associations were in accord with "earlier Judeo-Christian tradition...because the animals were sacred to pagan gods, whom the Christians identified with demons" (Russell 67). There are more than a score of animals that the Devil has been linked to, and they range from such mythological hybrids as the chimera to the mundane pests such as the fly. The most common bestial forms which the Devil assumed in the Middle Ages, however, were the serpent, whose origins retreat beyond the well-known reference in the book of *Genesis* to the dragon of *Revelation*, the whale, or Leviathan of *Isaiah*, and the goat, which provides another clear link between the animorphed Devil and the pagan gods, this time through association with the minor Greek deity Pan (Russell 67n).

Pan was a pastoral god associated with satyrs and fauns, the forest denizens of Greek mythology. Characteristically, Pan was envisioned as "half man and half goat, often with a large phallus...pointed goat-like ears, and, usually, a dense beard" (Link 44). His traits emphasize his nature as "bestial [and] lustful" (Link 45), and thus sinful to the ecclesiastic eyes of Medieval Europe. Church teaching converted Pan into "a servant of the Devil, or the Evil One in disguise" (45), and to reinforce this equation between the mis-understood pagan god and the incarnation of Christian evil, five aspects of Pan's form, his "horns, hoofs, ears, tail, and hairy lower body" (45) were incorporated into the developing image of the Devil.

These bestial traits are but one facet of the Medieval Satan. In an effort to reflect the complete opposition of the Devil to all that is Godly, the animal aspects of the figure
were coupled with exaggerated physical monstrousities to demonstrate Satan's "outward shape betraying his inner defect" (Russell 68). The particulars of this monstrosity vary:

[The Devil] is lame because of his fall from heaven; his knees are backward; he has an extra face on belly, knees, or buttocks; he is blind; he has horns and a tail; he has no nostrils, or only one; he has no eyebrows; his eyes are saucerlike and glow or shoot fire; he has cloven hooves; he emits a sulphurous odor, and when he departs he does so with a stench, noise, and smoke; he is covered with coarse, black hair; he has misshapen, bat-like wings. (Russell 68)

While these traits are all sufficiently monstrous and bizarre, it is the last two that, in addition to the aforementioned elements drawn from Pan, gain the most pervasive hold on the image of Satan. Russell observes that "the Devil's color is usually black, in conformity with Christian tradition and almost worldwide symbolism" (Russell 68) which associate that ebon hue with all things dark and dangerous, and Link colorfully elaborates this point, saying, "the Devil is black as a sign of polluted filth, in contrast to the white, pure angels" (Link 53), thus reinforcing the Medieval idea of Satan as an Adversary expressly polar to God. Likewise, the draconian wings of the Medieval Devil, which have their pictorial debut in a Giotto fresco of St. Francis (Link 68), follow a progression from feathered and angelic to bat-like and demonic that also stresses the binarism between the spiritual darkness of the Hell-bound Satan and the luminosity of God and the kingdom of Heaven that the Devil, in his obduracy, has abandoned.

This exploitation of Satan's appearance, which emphasizes the internal monstrosity of his ungodly sinfulness by literalizing it in his physical monstrosity, becomes the quintessential aspect of the Medieval representation of the Devil, and it is nowhere more powerfully rendered than in the vision literature and cycle dramas of the Middle Ages. The tradition of the Christian vision narrative involves itself with tales that "attempt to describe the afterlife in terms of an otherworld, a world beyond this life" (Gardiner xii).
Amalgamated from Scriptural sources in conjunction with pagan mythologies, the "realms" of Heaven and Hell depicted in the vision narratives take on describable qualities which render them more palpable, more real. The images of these otherworlds are translated to the reader through the eyes of the visionary, usually either a saint or a sinner, whose discorporeal soul experiences the vision while his body lies in a catatonic state (Gardiner xv). There are at least a dozen vision narratives that achieved popular success throughout Medieval Europe, each involving conceptions of Hell and Heaven which varied greatly in degree and detail. For the purposes of any work concerning the Medieval figuring of the Devil, however, Tundale's Vision represents the pinnacle of the vision genre in its ingenious and influential rendering of the diabolic angel.

Tundale's Vision "dates from 1149 and is said to have occurred in Ireland" (Gardiner xiv). It is one of the more highly developed of the vision narratives, depicting a segregated Hell where sins are punished according to type, and its visionary is the knight Tundale, a sinner "who was notorious among his contemporaries for his boisterous life" (Gardiner xv-xvi). His soul having been led through various stages of Hell by an angelic guide, Tundale comes at last to the pit of Hell, the nethermost region of the infernal realm, where he is privy to see Satan.

The initial focus of the encounter is on the Devil's titanic form. Tundale "saw the Prince of Shadows, the enemy of humanity, the devil whose size overshadowed every kind of beast" (Gardiner 177). Gigantism was one of the most common types of diabolic monstrosity depicted in the Middle Ages, likely because it was a particularly effective way of representing the malformed hugeness of Lucifer's Pride, the very sin from which his decline was generated. Once his shock at seeing so unfathomably large a demon before him passes, Tundale relates the particulars of the monster:

This beast was very black, like a raven, with a body of human shape from its feet to its head, except that it had many hands and a tail. This horrible
monster had no less than a thousand hands, and each hand...had twenty fingers connected to it; these fingers...had very long claws with a thousand points, and they were iron, and in his feet were just as many claws. Moreover, he had a very long and great beak, and his tail was very long and sharp and ready to injure souls with its very sharp points.

(Gardiner 177)

Many of the traditional elements of the Devil, including blackness and a tail, are present in this representation, but the defining feature, the thousand hands, is not so common. It suggests as a possible source the Hecatonchires, or "hundred-handed" titans of Greek mythology, who were originally imprisoned in the earth by Uranos, released by Zeus to aid in his war against the other titans (Morford 61). After Zeus' victory, the Hecatonchires were set to ward the titans imprisoned beneath the earth in Tartarus in much the same fashion that Lucifer governs the souls in Tundale's Hell, where, "just by breathing, he inhaled and exhaled all the souls into different parts of hell" (Gardiner 178). As fearsome as this apparition appears, however, Tundale's Lucifer is more a figure of impotency than of any terror. He is bound "on a forged iron wicker-work placed over coals inflamed by the inflated bellows of an innumerable number of demons" (Gardiner 178), where he is doomed to burn for all eternity. Tundale relates that "the miserable beast, always striking hard, was struck hard, and the burning tormentor was tormented in the punishment with the souls" (Gardiner 178). In this fashion, the force of Lucifer's monstrosity is overshadowed by the focus on his penalty, and the emphasis remains firmly entrenched in the Medieval reading of Satan as an example of the futility of resisting the divine will.

For all its merits, however, Tundale's Vision seems doomed to inhabit the shadows of scholastic obscurity, for it was outshone in the early fourteenth century by the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, an author who, "by common consent, stands with the supreme Western masters of literary representation" (Bloom 1). Even though Tundale does present a "description of hell [which] is the most fully and consistently developed
before the *Inferno* (Gardiner 253), and clearly serves as an influence on Dante's composition, it remains the images of Canto 34 of the *Inferno*, and not those of the fourteenth chapter of *Tundale*, which provide the consummate embodiment of the Medieval Satan in all his oppositional despair.

The final Canto of the *Inferno* opens with a comment by Virgil, the pagan poet who functions in the role of guardian angel to the wayfaring Pilgrim in Dante's version of the vision narrative. The Roman shade says, "*Vexilla regis prodeunt Inferni*" (Dante 34:1), a phrase perverted from its original form through the addition of the adjective *Inferni*. What began as a hymn to invoke the "advance of the king's banners" in preparation for the unveiling of the Cross now stands as a herald for the "Infernal king," and prepares the Pilgrim for the sight of Lucifer (Musa 384 n.1). More importantly, the line prepares the reader for "Dante's rhetorical intent...to make the king of Hell and infernal parody of the king of Heaven" (Ceserani 434). Yet Dante will surpass even parody in his depiction of Lucifer. Following the Medieval tenets of portraying the Devil as Adversary and opposite of God, Dante carries his idea of *contrapasso*, a dominant theme of the *Inferno* in its entirety, to its brilliant conclusion in his precise and exacting representation of both the fallen angel and his punishment.

Crossing the frozen, soul-swallowing lake of Cocytus, the Pilgrim, peering through the stygian gloom, describes something like "a far-off windmill turning its huge sails / when a thick fog begins to settle in, / or when the light of day begins to fade" (Dante 34:4-6). As they close on the obliterated form, the "windmill" reveals itself to be "the creature who was once so beautiful" (34:18): Lucifer. As in *Tundale's Vision*, the initial focus in the description of the Devil's physical monstrosity falls on his gargantuan form. Dante writes:

The king of the vast kingdom of all grief
stuck out with half his chest above the ice;
my height is closer to the height of giants
than theirs is to the length of his great arms;
consider now how large all of him was:

this body in proportion to his arms. (Dante 34:28-33)

The gigantic stature of Lucifer is the first manifestation of the idea foreshadowed by the first line of Canto 34; the creation of a Devil who is "the absolute opposite of the spirit of God" (Russell 231). While Lucifer's giant form traces its ultimate roots to the blending of folklore and theology which created the Medieval version of monstrosity, its direct antecedent in the *Inferno* is found in the pagan titans, struck to Hell by Zeus, who attend the pit of Cocytus (Musa 359 n.44). As Peter Dronke observed, however, the comparison demonstrates that Lucifer is "immersed more deeply in ice than the giants are in their pit, that he is larger than they are, and [suggests] that his supreme rebellion against God overgoes the rebellion of the pagan giants against the divine kingdom of Jupiter" (Ceserani 436). This reading reinforces the idea that Lucifer's crime of treason against God is viewed in the Medieval world as "the ultimate sin and absurdity" (Russell 227), but Dante's purpose in the *Inferno* surpasses such a general condemnation of the Devil in its design and its intent. He has fixed Lucifer at the nadir of his cosmological Hell, that point farthest in physical and spiritual distance from Heaven, to emphasize not only that the Devil is the root of all evils, but specifically "that he is the polar opposite of reason, truth, and spirit" (Russell 231), three of the primary virtues of the Holy Trinity.

This vision of Lucifer as foil to the Trinity is the defining feature of Dante's Devil, and it becomes the crux of his representation of the character. Closing upon the horror, Dante writes, "Once [Lucifer] was as fair as now he's foul" (Dante 34:34), continuing the standard Medieval idea that Lucifer's angelic form was twisted and made hideous as an external sign of his malignant nature, before painting his actual description of the Dark Lord:

Oh, how amazed I was when I looked up
and saw a head - one wearing three faces!
One was in front (and that was a bright red),
the other two attached themselves to this one
just above the middle of each shoulder,
and at the crown all three were joined in one:
The right face was a blend of white and yellow,
the left the color of those people's skin
who live along the river Nile's descent.  (Dante 34:37-45)

This triune Devil is a direct and dark mirror to the Holy Trinity. Whereas "the Trinity is
one substance in three persons, Lucifer, by contrast, though one substance, has three
faces, as if he were three persons, thus parodying the Trinity" (Cervigni 55). Even the
colors of Lucifer's triple visages may be read as "antithetically analogous to the qualities
attributed to the Trinity, [where] Highest Wisdom would be opposed by ignorance
(black), Divine Omnipotence by impotence (white), [and] Primal Love by hatred or envy
(red)" (Musa 384 n.38).

Two other features of the Devil, his wings and his mouths, are rendered in explicit
triplicate by Dante, and while these further the physical foiling of the Trinity by the person
of Lucifer, they function even more brilliantly in developing the exquisite contrapasso for
this most wayward of angels. As with the other punishments in the Inferno, Dante tailors
Lucifer's contrapasso to the specifics of his offense. In this case, Lucifer's punishment,
including his physical monstrosities, can "be related to the one fundamental attribute which
Lucifer possessed before his fall and which became totally perverted because of his
rebellion against God: his former condition as one of the seraphim" (Cervigni 45).

Lucifer's departure from the seraphic is figured in his physical transformation.
From matchless beauty he descends to gorgonic hideousness, and his changed wings are
evidence of this. Though they retain their proper number, six, "these are not the feathery
wings of angels, burning with living gold...but leathery bat-wings, a symbol of [Lucifer's]
darkness and blindness" (Russell 230). More than even their appearance, however, it is the
wings' function which is perverted by the Devil's evil and so provides for one of the crucial
elements of his *contrapasso*. Seraphim, Cervigni notes, "fly around God's throne while singing his praise" (Cervigni 45). By sinning, Lucifer corrupted the intended function of his angelic condition, and in his most fitting and ironic *contrapasso*, the very instrument which he willed to corruption now serves as vehicle of his endless torment by enforcing his total isolation from God. Cervigni explains, "the six wings, which once moved [Lucifer] around God's throne faster than any other angel...now cause the traitors' fixity and [his] own eternal immobility at the center of the frozen lake" (Cervigni 45).

This static isolation at the point cosmically farthest from the side of God's throne demonstrates exactly how profound the sin of Lucifer was. The angel who once held the proximal position to the Deity now languishes forever at the polar end of the universe, trapped there by the motion of his own wings, which blow "three winds continuously in motion / to lock Cocytus eternally in ice" (Dante 34: 51-2), a *contrapasso* that, masterful in itself, becomes further enhanced through its coupling with the perverted actions of Lucifer's weeping eyes and treble mouths.

Still fixed and staring at the spectacle of the Devil, the Pilgrim observes that Lucifer,

... wept from his six eyes, and down three chins
were dripping tears all mixed with bloody slaver.
In each of his three mouths he crunched a sinner,
with teeth like those that rake the hemp and flax,
keeping three sinners constantly in pain  (Dante 34:53-7).

The tears of the Devil, Jeffrey Russell notes, recall the Classical influence on the figure of the Medieval Satan, and at the same time further the specific Christian iconography of the Adversarial Devil. Much "like the gory tears of the cyclops Polyphemus, blinded by Odysseus, the bloody weeping of the hideous giant...repels, and it parodies the blood, water, and tears shed by the heavenly Lord upon his cross" (Russell 232), and also offers a tangible sign that "Lucifer understands his eternal condemnation" (Cervigni 48).
Even more than these tears, however, it is the masticating mouths of the Devil that provide the most resounding statement of Lucifer's *contrapasso*. As the sextet of wings were intended to propel the seraph around the Heavenly throne, so the mouths of Lucifer "were intended for the praise of the divinity" (Cervigni 45). In Hell, however, the only testament they provide is to the recompense of Lucifer's incommensurate Pride, and that is made via their utter silence. If God is the Word, then the Devil is the anti-Word, an identification literally figured by Dante through Lucifer's non-speech. Dino Cervigni elaborates, observing that the muteness of the mouths expresses "a perversion of their intended purpose, God's eternal praise,...[stripping Lucifer] of what his being was once created for and [forming] his greatest torment. Once the most sublime singer of God's praise, Lucifer is now condemned to eternal silence; he is deprived of the word" (Cervigni 46).

It is not only this silence that enforces Lucifer's anti-Word status, but the cannibalistic gnashings of the mouths as well. Dante has placed the three arch-traitors of human history, Brutus, Cassius, and Judas, in the mouths of the arch-traitor of cosmic history, and while their eternal torment in Lucifer's jaws is a gruesomely effective punishment for the men, it is also an extension of the silent torture that is the Devil's lot, for, "Lucifer's cannibalism...bears out his eternal inability to accede to speech and his antithetical condition to God's Word, who, having become flesh, offered his body as nourishment to his believers" (Cervigni 46). Lucifer's non-verbal, cannibalistic mouths thus continue the parody of God, offering not the redemptive Word of Christ, but the devouring silence of sin.

As Dante draws Canto 34, and with it the *Inferno*, to its close, he leaves in the reader's mind an indelible image of the Medieval incarnation of the Devil as a monstrously giant fiend who is literally fixed and defined by his opposition to God; a false and futile "obstinacy in evil and error [that] finds its poetic expression in ice and infinite silence" (Ceserani 436). When the Pilgrim and the Poet have seen their fill of Hell's overlord, they
undertake the strange descent/ascent through the gravitational center of the earth, climbing "the shaggy shanks of Dis" (Dante 34:79) and emerging on the opposite side of the world.

There, in the final stanzas of his poem, Dante gives his conclusory declamation against Lucifer, who "has not changed his position since his fall" (Dante 34:120), but remains in the icy stasis of his proud sin. The upturned legs of Lucifer, thrust vainly towards the Heaven whose celestial majesty arrests the eyes of the Pilgrim and his guide in the poem's last line, give a fitting, final emphasis to the fate of the Devil, and all who would defy God: theirs is the silent, frigid blackness of Hell, from where they can never elevate their gazes "to see once more the stars" (34:139).

While Lucifer reaches the apogee of his Medieval literary incarnations in Dante's *Inferno*, his character during this period is not wholly confined to the vellum, and its development on the stage in the mystery, or cycle-dramas not only parallels and supports the tradition developed in the vision narratives, but expands it in ways that form the germ of what would be seen as virtually iconoclastic developments in the portrayal of the Devil in the centuries to follow. Mystery dramas were a celebrated art in Medieval Europe, and especially in England, where the four surviving cycles; *York, Chester, Townley*, and *Coventry* originated (Happe 10). While the plays vary in their specifics, they "show a remarkable and consistent similarity" (10) which stems from the fact that "the plays were written as part of [the same] theological message, and were intended...to celebrate the Christian story from the Creation to Doomsday, with two central peaks at the Nativity and the Passion of Christ" (11). Though Satan makes appearances in the later episodes of the cycles, his dominant stage-time is given in the initial plays, specifically those depicting his fall from Heaven and the subsequent corruption of Adam and Eve. For the purposes of this work we will confine ourselves to the consideration of these two scenes as they are represented in the *Chester* cycle, for, in a series of plays critically described as, "an
accomplished opening pageant" (Seaton 203), *Chester* gives the most complete and engaging treatment of the Devil's character of all the four cycles.

The *Chester* Satan is essentially a traditional Medieval Satan, and the representation of the character in the play is intended to carry on the image of the Devil as an errant opposite of God. For this reason, Jean Seaton notes, "God, as Creator, is the dominant 'character' in the opening plays" (Seaton 203). The *Chester* God shows "omnipotence as his primary characteristic" (204), and it is an omnipotence specifically expressed through a hierarchical image in which "God's power is shown in relational terms" (205). In Heaven, God, the supreme patriarch, demonstrates this hierarchy by entering "into dialogue with the angels...admonishing, chiding, [and] commanding" (204). This representation of God, Seaton argues, is critical to the play, for God's "wisdom, generosity, and love as ruler must be brought to the attention of the audience so that the perversity of Lucifer's rebellion may be obvious" (206). This role of God as patriarch or king in Heaven is most clear when he makes his covenant with the angels that they shall share forever in all the splendours of Heaven, so long as they "touche not [God's] trone by non assent" (*Chester* 1:70). As Seaton observes, God "has exalted his angels, especially Lucifer, and he expresses his love for them. In return he asks obedience in acknowledging his overlordship" (Seaton 215).

Yet the problem of Lucifer's rebellion is not so univalent as Seaton's proposition implies. True, God in the *Chester* plays is indeed the omnipotent social hierarch, and the fall of Lucifer is clearly developed in terms of a civil disobedience, but these aspects were never intended to function without support, and the full juxtaposition between God and the Devil in *Chester* can only be appreciated if one considers the theological characteristics which buttress the social intimations unfolding in the course of the play. From this perspective, the defining quality of the *Chester* God's omnipotence rests in his *logos*, or Word.
Speaking the opening lines of the play, God clearly figures himself not only as the Heavenly Father, but as the Divine Will and Wisdom:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ego sum alpha et omega,}
\textit{Primus et nobilissimus;}  
It is my will yt sholde be soe 
Yt is, it was, yt shall be thus. 
I am greate God gracious, which never had begininge. 
The holy foode of parentes is set in my [essentia,] 
I am the tryall of the Trynite that never shall be twynninge; 
Peareles patron imperiall, and \textit{patris sapientia" (Chester 1:1-8).}
\end{quote}

Here God not only emphasizes his Trinitarian nature, but his wisdom and his will, and it is that last attribute which bears most weightily on his omnipotence, for throughout the play we see that "what [God] wills, what he commands, comes to be" (Seaton 204). Since language is the embodiment of the will, the Word of God becomes both the sign of his omnipotence and the mirror against which the prideful light of Lucifer will be refracted into the void.

Yet language in the cycle dramas is not solely the providence of God. The angels, Lucifer among them, possess the capacity for speech as well, and this posed something of a conundrum for the playwrights. In keeping with Medieval tradition (and the cycles are nothing if not traditional), the Devil must be represented as the antithesis of God. But the stage is a vehicle of the oral tradition, and reducing the Devil's character to a mute role, as he appears in the vision narratives, to show his oppositional nature, is clearly not an option in a genre where the spoken line carries the meaning and essence of the character. If the Devil is to play a role of any impact at all, he must speak, and just as the language issuing from the mouth of the Divine must enforce his all-powerful goodness, so the words spoken by Lucifer must demonstrate his role as God's foil.
And so they do. Before his fall, Lucifer exists in Heaven as God's "chief courtier" (Seaton 206), but the moment God departs his throne, Lucifer's speech shifts from the "sycophantic...acknowledging [of] God's greatness and the glory of his creation" (211) to words which become the incarnation of his pride. He boasts:

Ah! Ah! That I am wonderous bright
Among yow all shyning so cleare!
Of all heaven I beare the light,
Though God himself and he were here,
All in this trone if that I were
Than sholde I be as wise as he.

What say yow, Angells all that be here?

Some conforte sone now let me see  
(Chester 1:105-12).

This declaration of his surpassing beauty meets with opposition from the other angels, who "will not assent unto [Lucifer's] pryde" (Chester 1:113), and even go so far as to warn Lucifer of the potential consequences of his disobedience, saying, "if that yow in thrall yow bringe, / Then shall yow have a wicked fall" (1:129-30). Lucifer, however, will have none of it. Goaded by a second angel, Lightbourne, whose name, "carried by light," makes him a literal extension of Lucifer, the "light-bearer," and a clear dramatic figuring of Lucifer's overweening Pride, the first-formed angel confirms himself in his sin:

Above great God I will me guyde,
And set my-self here, as I wene:
I am pereles and prince of pryde,
For God him self shynes not so sheene.
Here will I sit now in this stid
To exalt my-selfe in this same sea.
Behold my body, both handes and head!
The might of God is marked in me.
All Angelles turne to me, I redd,

And to your soveraigne knele on your knee! (Chester 1:161-70).

L.W. Cushman, commenting on the Chester cycle, notes that, "the cause of the fall... was the arrogance and pride of Satan [which] is expressed dramatically... by the presumptuous demand of Satan that the angels bow before him" (Cushman 18). Seaton elaborates on this point, saying, "the fact that [Lucifer] becomes a tyrant shows how incapable of [usurping God's throne] he is, and what an 'improper act of mimesis' his imitation is" (Seaton 212).

The impropriety of Lucifer's hubrisitic belief that "simply sitting on God's throne will make him as wise as God" (Seaton 212) comes swiftly to a head when Lucifer takes his seat upon God's throne, crowing "though God come here, I will not hence, / But sit right here before his face." (Chester 1:191-2). The moment the Lord returns, however, the juxtaposition of God's Word of power with Lucifer's impotent speech of pride becomes expressly obvious. Moved to wrath by the breaking of the covenant, God condemns Lucifer, "I charge yow fall tyll I byd 'Noe!' / To the pitt of hell, evermore to be!" (1:207-8). The stage direction immediately following these lines reads Tunc cadent Lucifer et Lightbourne, thus bearing out in action what is implicit in the construction of the characters of Lucifer and God. Lucifer can say he will set himself above God and usurp his throne, but he can not reinforce his speech with a corresponding act. His words, like the sin they represent, prove ultimately empty. In contrast, God, bearing the true Word, simply commands Lucifer and his company to fall into the abyss, and it is done. This is perhaps Chester's finest moment, for it defines the essential truths about the polarities separating God and the Devil in what amounts to an eloquently simple equation of proportions. All the lines of Lucifer's monologues, all his self-glorification and egotistic pride together can not in their sum match the power of God's monosyllable: "Fall."

In Hell, the play presents the traditional Medieval images of the once-angels. Lucifer and Lightbourne are now referred to as the First and Second Demons,
emphasizing their altered nature as a result of their fall, and their speech includes several references such as "thy stinking face," and "two feendes blake" (Chester 1:216; 230) in which "the devils bewail, among other things, the loss of their former beauty and brilliancy" (Cushman 23). The physical transformation accompanying the expulsion from Heaven is rendered on stage by the use of "grotesque costumes...with horns, tails, fangs, cloven hooves, and wings; monster costumes, half-animal and half-human; and costumes with faces on buttocks, belly, or knees" (Russell 254) in an effort to give dramatic life to the literary and artistic depictions of the Medieval Devil, and also to emphasize through physical polarities the disparity between God and the demons in a genre whose spatial restrictions impair any physical rendering of the gulf between Heaven and Hell.

Likewise, the speeches of the demons, and of Lucifer in particular, serve to further indite the Devil as the antithesis of God. The chief subject of the diabolic discourses is the corruption of the newly created Man, and it has been noted by many scholars that, in these monologues, the Devil's focus remains on his Pride (Russell 253). Having failed to dethrone God in Heaven, Lucifer will attempt to recoup his wounded ego and cause his Maker strife by engendering the birth of Evil in the human sphere. Meanwhile, as the Devil hatches his plot, the first of the Chester plays draws closed not with an infernal image, but with a spectacle that gives a final, dramatic closure to the theme of the Word of God in opposition to the word of the Devil. While Satan continues to boast and blow hollow threats, God is engaged in the ultimate example of linguistic empowerment; the creation of the universe through verbal extension of the Divine Will.

The culminating event of this Creation is, of course, the making of Man on the Sixth Day, and the subsequent temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve composes the matter of the second play in the Chester cycle. Set in the paradasic Garden of Eden, it is this play in particular which deserves critical attention for its fashioning of the Medieval "Satanic embodiment" in the figure of the serpent. While the source for the Fall of Man, the book of Genesis, makes no overt association between the Devil and the snake, saying only that,
"the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made" (Genesis 3:1), the Church Fathers were themselves subtle enough to make the equation between the serpent of Genesis and the dragon of Revelation. With the Fall of Adam and Eve "regarded as the source of all human evil...the tempter [was] identified with the Devil" (Russell 253), the source of all cosmic evil, in what amounted to an attempt to explain the suffering condition of man in a purportedly beneficent universe.

Whether the serpent is considered a literal embodiment of the Devil - that is, Lucifer in one of his many transmogrifications - or a tangible manifestation of the will of the Devil, which transcends Hell even as his corporeal self remains in its eternal stasis, was not a matter much debated in the Middle Ages. Satan, in some form, had come into the Garden of Eden in the guise of a serpent, and wrought there a terrible havoc. It is important to note, however, that while the appearance of the Devil as a serpent is certainly a departure from the incarnations found in Dante and the vision narratives, it is in no way a breach of the carefully established Medieval tradition, where both the writings of the Church Fathers and the folkloric roots permitted the Devil animal-forms because the very bestiality of the shape denotes, among other things, a sharp opposition to the ethereal super-intelligence of God.

In the second Chester play, the serpent's form receives detailed and telling attention. It is "an adder.../ Than wynges like a byrd she hase, / Feete as an adder, a maydens face" (Chester 2:193-5). The association here is two-fold. The wings of the adder clearly link it to the Medieval conception of the dragon as taken from Revelation, while the feminine features of the serpent link it to the lamia or the gorgons, two varieties of Greek demons which shared both female and serpentine attributes, and of course foreshadow Eve herself, who will be the target of the Devil's mischief and the direct cause of the Fall from Paradise.²

² The feminized Devil fell nicely into the tenets of the Medieval patriarchy, which at its
As in *Genesis*, the *Chester* Devil achieves a pseudo-triumph in the Fall of Man. He has put on his "adders coate" (*Chester* 2:206) and with his speech beguiled the woman into eating of the Forbidden Tree, saying its fruit "shall not lose yow blisse, / Ne no joy that is his, / But [make you] as wise as [God]" (2:222-4). This image of gaining the wisdom of God hearkens back to Lucifer's intent in claiming the Heavenly throne and demonstrates the human Fall as parallel to the angelic Fall, a reading enhanced by the appearance and actions of God in Eden. As with Lucifer in Heaven, God metes out swift justice in the Garden, and once again it is his Word which is seen to have true power. The Devil's promise to Eve that "yow shall knew both wayle and woe, / And be lyke to goddess, both twoo, / Thou and thy housband also" (2:238-40) is shown to be no more viable than Lucifer's claim that he would retain God's chair even in the face of the Deity himself. Though they have eaten of the Tree, Adam and Eve gain no power tantamount to God's, while his command of banishment, "Goe forth, take Eve with thee!" (2:384), has immediate and permanent effect, as the play again registers in its stage cue: *Tunc Deus emittet eos de Paradiso*.

Superficially it may appear that this expulsion is indeed a victory for the Devil - after all, it was the object of his design - but the reality of the situation, as understood by the Church Fathers and the Medieval scribes, poets, and playwrights, continues to uphold the traditional view of the Devil as impotent Adversary in two important ways. First, Satan still exhibits no direct and effective power. The success of his actions in Eden rests with God's judgment. God views the situation and elects to expel Adam and Eve from Paradise, but he could as easily have selected to allow them to remain. Thus the Fall of Man is an example not of the Devil's power, but of "God's absolute freedom of choice, based on his absolute power" (Seaton 214). Second, by the end of the *Chester* cycle, as in most extreme inscribed in the female much that was monstrous, and cited this Scriptural episode as justification for its misogyny.
the other mystery plays, God will have ordained a redemption for man through the
sacrifice of his Son. The Word of God will become flesh, and through his death and
resurrection utterly efface the slightest semblance of an actual victory that the Devil might
have seemed to have achieved through the corruption of Adam and Eve.

While it is therefore clear that the figure of the Devil in the second Chester play
ends no better than he does in the first installment, it must still be acknowledged that his
deceit has led to the God-ordered ejection of man from earthly Paradise and brought evil
into the world in the form of sin. The Fall of Adam and Eve forced Medieval thinkers to
consider the reality of evil; a reality too tangible, too pervasive to be effectively attributed
solely to a Devil locked away in a Dantecan Hell that was fathoms beyond all but the most
elevated of imaginations. Taking their cue from the interpretations of Genesis and the
representations of the Devil in both the Garden of Eden and the antecedent pieces of
folklore, they conceived of a broader use for the idea of the "Satanic embodiment." The
Devil, who had already usurped the form of the serpent, would now come to inhabit other
shapes, other guises, which would be collectively dubbed "monsters."

Essentially, the Medieval monster was an embodiment of the Devil, or the Evil
cosmically represented in the Devil, on Earth. As such, while monsters share many of the
traditionally diabolic characteristics, these traits are consistently portrayed in terms of a
human scale. Physical grotesqueness and a degree of isolation remain key elements for
these figures, but because the Medieval monster must be the opposite of man in the same
way the Medieval Devil is the opposite of God, the essence of their evilness, while rooted
in their Satanic natures, is mainly expressed in terms of their inability to exist in a social
sphere. Medieval monsters are savage, uncivilized, solitary creatures who, spurning the
company of men, seek instead to destroy that which, by their very natures, they can never
share, and in this particular aspect they are nowhere better represented than in the Anglo-
Saxon masterpiece, Beowulf.³

Composed sometime during the eighth century in Mercia or Northumbria, Beowulf
survives in only a single copy, the "Cotton Vitellius A XV" manuscript, which was likely
transcribed in the late tenth or early eleventh century (Alexander 11). It is a poem of
almost Homeric quality; a beautifully versed extolation of the exploits of the titular
Geatish prince, the man "for main strength of all men foremost / that trod the earth"
(Beowulf 196-7), as he strives towards his epical destiny. Among its numerous points of
note, Beowulf was for many years considered exemplary of the Christianization of pagan
sources typical of the Middle Ages, but Jeffrey Russell observes that the work is "now
generally held to be a Christian poem blending Christian with pagan Teutonic motifs,
Christian salvation with Teutonic heroism" (Russell 147), and this is the light in which the
monstrous characters of the poem are most correctly understood.⁴

There are three monsters in Beowulf: Grendel, his fiendish dam, and a dragon.
Many critics have noted that three is a number in which there is more than "a hint of the
unholy trinity" (Russell 148) embodied in the Medieval Lucifer, but the true parallel
between the Devil and his poetic incarnations far surpasses this topical relationship. In his
acclaimed reading of Beowulf, "The Monsters and the Critics," Medievalist J.R.R. Tolkien
observed that the three monsters "are creatures, fecund mancynnes [enemies of mankind],
of a similar order and kindred significance" (Tolkien 86). Iconographically united as foes
of man, Grendel, his dam, and the dragon symbolize the Medieval tradition equating

³ The other major Medieval monster in the Epic tradition was the Saracen. Giant, bestial,
dark-skinned infidels who worshipped demonic idols, they were frequent foes in such
works as Guillaume d'Orange and the Chanson de Roland.

⁴ The issue of Beowulf's composition remains contested, but the presence of Christian
motifs, whether original or additional, is a fact of the poem as we have inherited it, and a
Christianized interpretation is thereby valid.
monstrosity and inhumanity. Viewing the three together, in accordance with Tolkien's suggestion, unfolds a clear progression from the semi-human Grendel to the utterly bestial drake that demonstrates the Medieval polarities between God and the Devil being represented in Earthly microcosm through the relationship between man and the monsters in *Beowulf*.

We shall begin with Grendel, who of the three monsters encountered by *Beowulf* is the most nearly human. His existence as a Satanic embodiment is made clear by the poet, who terms Grendel: "an enemy from hell" (*Beowulf* 101), a "hell-fiend" (1275), "hell's familiar" (163), and "the demon" (707), all of which are "terms commonly used for the Devil in Old English literature or translations of common Latin terms for the Devil" (Russell 148). Beyond his titles, Grendel exhibits the physical monstrosity consistent with Medieval depictions of the Devil. His form is "more huge than any human being" (*Beowulf* 1352) - his head alone requires four warriors to bear it back to Heorot after *Beowulf* claims it as a trophy (1635-9) - his reptilian hand is tipped with "terrible talon[s]" (988), and his eyes are kindled with "an unlovely light like that of fire" (727), and he also echoes Lucifer in his abode, a subaquatic, fire-lit cave which is most Hellish indeed.

But Grendel is only the first step in the progressive inhumanity of the monsters in *Beowulf*, and as such he blends monstrous traits with others that, albeit perverted, are clearly human. In addition to his diabolic titles, Grendel is also figured as "kindred of Cain" (*Beowulf* 107), from whom "came down all kinds misbegotten / - ogres and elves and evil shades - / and also the Giants" (111-13). This is Grendel's human lineage, drawn from the seed of the man who brought death into the world. Cain is the first monster, a Satanic embodiment whose appearance is completely human, but whose inordinate pride, wounded when God finds Cain's brother's offerings the more pleasing, and his utter, callous impenitence for his dark fratricide, registered in the infamous "Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Genesis* 4:9), are clear parallels between the man and the Devil whose evil he first anthropomorphizes.
As punishment for his crime, Cain is marked by God, "that no one finding him should kill him" (Genesis 4:15), and then cast out to wander the land of Nod in endless banishment, and Grendel, along with his brethren trolls and ettin, shares this inherited curse. He "had dispossessed all / blades of their bite on him" (Beowulf 803–4), an allusion to Cainian invulnerability, and he haunted "the fell and fen" (104) and "also the tracks of exile" (1352) in an isolation figuring Cain’s peregrinations in Nod, which themselves reify Lucifer’s fall from Heaven. Likewise, Grendel’s murderous assaults on the mead-hall, spurred by a hatred of the kinship and joy exemplified in Heorot, are doubly mimetic. On one hand, Grendel’s attack, in which he:

set his hands on

a sleeping soldier, savagely tore at him,

gnashed his joint-bones, bolted huge gobbets,
sucked at his veins, and had soon eaten

all of the dead man, (Beowulf 742-5)

is a graphic example of cannibalism, which must remind us of Lucifer’s eternally devouring mouths in Canto 34 of the Inferno, but on the other, this same furious feast represents the ultimate act of inhuman anti-sociality. Grendel’s monstrosity is thus consistently reinforced in the poem by his outcast status and savagely violent reactions to human civilization.

This marginal behavior, depicted in Grendel’s "ceaseless hostility towards men, and hatred of their joy, his superhuman size and strength, his love of the dark,...his hideousness and habitation in dark forsaken places" (Tolkien 89) is the essence of the Medieval construction of the Satanic embodiment. By giving Grendel overtly diabolical associations in his monstrous form, and granting his humanity as descended from Cain, who is himself the Biblical progenitor of all Satanic embodiments, and finally by rendering Grendel as marginal to Danish society through both his physical exclusion and the record of his gross incivilities, the Beowulf poet inscribes in his semi-human monster "an image of man estranged from God" (Tolkien 89) which parallels the angelic estrangement from the
Deity as incarnated in Lucifer and upholds the Medieval idea that all Evil, human or cosmic, in the end progresses back to the Devil.

This progression continues with Grendel's dam, who is a creature even less human than her offspring. The poet introduces her as: "a monstrous ogress... / doomed to dwell in the dread waters, / in the chilling currents, because of that blow / whereby Cain became the killer of his brother" (Beowulf 1258-62). The implication is that Grendel's dam is some aquatic fiend, a monster whose inhumanity is emphasized by the fact that its native clime is not earth and air, but water, and indeed, except for her retributive raid on Heorot, Grendel's mother is only encountered underwater. Like her son, she is somewhat reptilian and formidably gigantic, as the poet notes upon his hero's emerging into her lair, "it was then that [Beowulf] saw the size of this water-hag, / damned thing of the deep" (1518-19), and her monstrous attributes include a superhuman strength, clawed hands, and an invulnerability to human weapons exemplified by the fact that it requires a "Giant-sword from the former days" (1567) to slay her. Once again the Beowulf poet is blending traits of diabolic origins with those of human perversity to create the Satanic embodiment, though here in a scale less well-balanced than in Grendel's case. In fact, while her son shared the mendicant nature of Cain and related to human society precisely through his visible exclusion from its company, Grendel's dam is completely isolated, and her sole social action, that gesture which becomes the defining aspect of her monstrosity, is her vengeful strike against the mead-hall in the wake of her son's death. As Grendel stands closer to Cain and the human facets of the Satanic embodiment, so his dam is a degree removed: she is a transitional representation of evil resting somewhere between the semi-human horror of Grendel and the almost cosmic monstrosity of the dragon.

This wyrm, which represents the dominant evil of Beowulf's second half, sits at the polar end of the monstrous spectrum from Grendel and his dam. While it may initially appear that the guardian of the barrow and the denizens of the tarn have little in common, the poem clearly develops the dragon in relation to the other monsters, fixing it as the
logical result of a progression of Satanic embodiments drawn out to their most inhuman conclusion. As with Grendel and his mother, the relationship between the dragon and the monsters of the poem's first half is merely a question of degree.

All three monsters are giants; the dragon is the greatest behemoth by far. All three have diabolic qualities mingled with evilness of a more social, human sphere; Grendel is the least diabolic, the most Cainian, while the dragon is the exact opposite. In fact, a strong argument can be made that the dragon, with its "obvious association with the serpent of Eden [and] the connection with the serpent of Revelation" (Russell 149), is the nearest a Satanic embodiment can approach to the Devil without crossing the border from earthly extension to cosmic incarnation.

As close as it might come to the archetype, however, the dragon of Beowulf never fully loses its place as a Satanic embodiment in the poem. Though its "alienness to the human community...is more radical" (Duncan 116) than that of the other monsters because its serpentine form renders it physically inhuman in a fashion Grendel and his dam only foreshadow, the dragon's monstrosity is not purely topical, but functions, like that of the poem's other monsters, on a human level through anti-social behavior that could be understood by Medieval audiences as Evil.

In a continuation of the monstrous progression present in Beowulf, the dragon's relationship to the society of man takes its cue from Grendel's dam. As she struck against Heorot in an act of bloody revenge for the death of her son, so the dragon lashes out at Beowulf's kingdom in reaction to an act of thievery, determined that "his fire would cruelly requite the loss / of the dear drinking vessel" (Beowulf 2305-6). Vengeance as a motive for action is undeniably a product of social intercourse. The fact that it is the impetus for the violent behaviors which define Grendel, his dam, and the dragon as monstrous figures cements both the understanding of the Medieval Satanic embodiment as a rendering of diabolic qualities in those things marginal to the human sphere, and the reading of the three Beowulfian monsters as progressing farther from the society of man,
descending deeper and deeper into these margins of Evil as they paint in microcosmal strokes the eternal opposition between God and the Devil upon the canvas of the Earth.

In Beowulf, one cannot speak of this opposition, nor truly see the full function of the monstrous progression, without bringing into play the hero of the poem. As Michael Alexander, introducing his translation of the work, observes, Beowulf "is the very type of a hero in that it is his eagerness to seek out and meet every challenge alone and unarmed that makes him glorious in life and brings him to his tragic death" (Alexander 15). Indeed, it is the nature of Beowulf and his challenges that encapsulates the essence of the opposition within the poem. Though Beowulf purports to be about the travails of men "hemmed in a hostile world" (Tolkien 72), it is noteworthy that its protagonist has more in common with his adversaries, the monsters, than he does with his fellow men. Beowulf is endowed with a superhuman strength and a superhuman volition towards victory which Tolkien nicely phrases as the hero's "creed of unyielding will" (70). In his deeds, in his mere presence, Beowulf is as much a giant among the Geats and Danes as is Grendel or any of his other foes, and he is also just as marginal. He must be, for the Medieval dynamic of polarities cannot function unless a mirror exists in which to see the opposites. In a work where Evil is represented in a series of exaggerated, nearly allegorical embodiments, the hero will by necessity appear as their foil.

So it is with Beowulf. More than a man, the Geatish prince is a virtual descendant of Hesiod's "godlike race of heroes, who are called / The demi-gods - the race before our own" (Alexander 15). The Greek historian was referring to such figures as Herakles, Perseus, Achilles, and the myriad other heroes of Classical mythology, but the Teutonic tradition from which Beowulf is drawn is not without its parallel figures. Norse mythology boasts its own demi-gods, most notably Sigurd and Siegfried (Bulfinch 305), and Beowulf certainly expresses sufficient merit for inclusion in such a group. He is a conqueror at arms, a noble man, moral of carriage, just in his principles, and courageous at heart; he is the poem's embodiment of Good, precisely as its monsters are its figures of Evil. Within
the Medieval constructs which govern the poem, Beowulf blends the Divine and the human to create the Christian equivalent of a demi-god, a man who was: "of all the world's kings / the gentlest of men, and the most gracious, / the kindest to his people, the keenest for fame" (Beowulf 3180-2). These lines, the last of the poem, are delivered over Beowulf's barrow, and tacitly demonstrate the merger of Christian and Teutonic values in the hero to create a fitting champion to stand against the monsters of the poem.

Why, then, does Beowulf die? If he is rightly read as the godly antithesis to the triumvirate of diabolic monsters, and the tenets of Christianity preach the ultimate victory of Good over Evil, God over the Devil, why does Beowulf end his final conflict in a fatal draw? Victory in death is the founding theme of Christianity, yet "every Biblical allusion in Beowulf...is to what Christians call the Old Testament" (Bloom, Beowulf 1), and no mention of the redemptively oriented New Testament is ever assertively made in the poem. Additionally, the fact that after "Beowulf and the dragon destroy each other...a society is destroyed" (Alexander 32), enforces the idea that Beowulf is no Christ-figure, for his death, instead of redeeming, damns mankind. With such substantial evidence against a reading of Beowulf's death as allegoric of Christian salvation, we must look elsewhere for a solution to this conundrum.

The answer, perhaps, lies in the unique relationship between Beowulf and the monsters. They are foils, opposites, and in them the cosmic struggle is redefined on the human level. But while the Evil represented in the poem is progressive, growing more and more marginal in each incarnation, Beowulf is in this respect static. As an embodiment of Good he is of a fixed degree, which is to say that while Beowulf is superhuman, he can never become more superhuman.

This limited quality is made apparent in the conflicts between the hero and the monsters. When Beowulf meets Grendel, who is his most direct foil and equal foe, it is apparent from the outset that the monster is overmatched. Good and Evil clash in equal proportions, and Good, in keeping with the Medieval tradition, triumphs. When the hero
combats Grendel's dam, however, the balance is somewhat altered. She is more monstrous than her son, and hence nearer to incarnate Evil than Beowulf is to incarnate Good, and his battle with her in the depths of the mere is more difficult and deadly than his combat with Grendel. Still, the dam is not so far removed from the human that she can not be defeated, and Beowulf, though sorely tried, again stands triumphant. Fifty years later, in the trial of the dragon, he will not be so fortunate.

Beowulf falls to the dragon for two reasons. The first is the logical continuation of the reasoning articulated above. The dragon is the apical form of Satanic embodiment in the poem. Nearly cosmic in its evilness, the dragon is "the older and more elemental" (Tolkien 86) of the monsters in Beowulf, a creature so far removed from all things human that its conquest is so much beyond the ken of mortals that even their mightiest cannot stand against it. While Beowulf slays the dragon, he is himself annihilated in the process, effectively "canceling the triumph" (Tolkien 86) of superhuman Good over semi-cosmic Evil and paving the way for the wholesale social anarchy which hovers just beyond the end of the poem.5

This brings us to the second reason for the hero's demise: Beowulf dies because he must. It is a poetic necessity, for the world of Middle Earth is still the realm of men, and heroes like Beowulf have no more place within human society than the monsters that haunt its margins. In the poem, mankind exists in a precarious balance, framed by superhuman Good and inhuman Evil. By slaying the dragon, the hero has defeated the poem's ultimate Satanic embodiment. From the perspective of binary oppositions, Beowulf has eliminated the last, and darkest reflection of himself. With the dragon gone, there is no further embodiment of Evil to necessitate an embodiment of Good, and hence the hero,

5 Another plausible reading is that this is the Teutonic ending, fittingly Epic, of a pagan poem to which Christian values were later appended (see: Bloom, "Beowulf Introduction").
too, must vanish, leaving mankind to the vagaries of his existence until such time as the next dragon comes, when another hero shall rise to meet the challenge anew.

Thus *Beowulf* successfully continues the pattern of polarities intrinsic in the Medieval tradition. The poem’s monsters, a triad of Satanic embodiments characterized by their progressive dislocation from the human social center toward the margins of monstrosity, are defeated by a hero who himself is a figure of extra-human goodness. The actions of the poem reify the macrocosmal struggle between God and the Devil as depicted in *Tundale’s Vision*, *Dante’s Inferno*, and the *Chester cycle*. Just as Lucifer’s prideful opposition is cast down by God’s righteous Word, so the poetic monsters rise up against human society only to be beaten back by Beowulf. The Geatish prince’s victories on Middle Earth reflect God’s victories in Heaven, and the corporeal deaths of Grendel, his dam, and the dragon figure the spiritual death that is Lucifer’s Hell.

This is the essence of the Medieval treatment of the diabolic. Wrought strongly in the tradition of Christian theology, it was a perception of Evil which dominated the Medieval period and would remain the standard of representation for the coming centuries. Though its literary forms were as variegated as the shapes of the Devil himself, its message retained a clarity of image that was direct and powerful. Evil, whether presented as Satan incarnate or as the Satanic embodiments termed “monsters,” was always far fallen from man, and farther still from God.
Adamant Apostasy: Milton's Satan

The triumph and the vanity,
The rapture of the strife-
The earthquake voice of Victory!
To thee the breath of life...
All quell'd! - Dark Spirit what must be
The madness of thy memory!

- Lord Byron

No standard is immutable, and the Medieval image of the Devil, while static enough to become established as the traditional rendering of Lucifer in his fallen state, ultimately finds itself, like so many ideas of the Middle Ages, subjected to the sweeping gale of philosophic change known as the Renaissance, and its equally tempestuous theological counterpart, the Reformation. There was, of course, as much need in the seventeenth as in the eleventh century for a definable shape with which to associate Evil, but the particular elements conjoined in this later shape would forever alter the incarnated character of the Devil. The rebirth of Humanism in Europe excavated an anthropocentric ideology buried by the deocentrism of the Medieval period, and with man once more the measure of the universe, his representations of cosmic abstractions such as Good and Evil necessarily become more personified as well. In the case of the Devil, this resulted in a departure from the Church Fathers' focus on the results of Lucifer's Fall from Heaven and subsequent depiction of the Devil as a static, monstrous, Hell-bound, and ultimately impotent foil of God, and a movement towards a more humanized vision of Evil that,
while bearing traces of this Medieval archetype, was centered as much on the causes of Lucifer's catastrophe as those events which followed after.

It is the Satan of John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* who comes most to represent the Renaissance conception of the Devil. Terrible in his Pride and Wrath, potent of intellect and volition, eloquent in his speech, cunning, motile, and above all implacable in his purpose, Milton's Satan is in many ways as distant from the Medieval incarnation of the Devil as that character was from the Medieval God. Yet for all his apparently iconoclastic novelty, this Renaissance Satan is also well-grounded in the tradition of the Middle Ages. Like the Lucifer of Dante's *Inferno* or Tundale's *Vision*, Milton's Devil finds his germ in "the Bible with all its commentators (including the rabbinical) and expanders" (LeComte 33), but beyond these Scriptural roots there exists another Medieval source which, combined with the Epic influences of Homer and Virgil, perhaps affected the particular development of Milton's Satan more than any other pre-existing work of diabolical content. That source is *Genesis B*.

An Anglo-Saxon poem dated "speculatively in the mid-ninth century" (Bradley 11), *Genesis B* survived into posterity as a portion of a single manuscript, the *Junius 11*, which was codified sometime on the cusp of the eleventh century (9). The poem, which is thought to find its own source in the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great (Hill 290), presents an account of the Fall of the Angels and the Fall of Man that finally celebrates the "love of God for mankind which ennobles man and transcends the justified wrath that human nature has at times incurred" (Bradley 11). Alice Turner notes that these Scriptural themes, while of themselves common, are treated in *Genesis B" with more detail and a distinctly feudal approach" (Turner 104), that is reflected in the poem's abundance of combative and hierarchical imagery. Such martial allusions are likely derived from the "Germanic military ethos that commonly appears in Old English poetry of even avowedly religious purpose" (Jager 2), and provide the poem with an undertone that is at times almost Epic.
This blending of Anglo-Saxon and Christian motifs is a portion of what makes Genesis B unique among Medieval accounts of the two Falls, but the poem's treatment of the Devil is where both the true novelty and the most powerful prefigurings of Paradise Lost are to be found. Within what is ultimately a traditional representation, Genesis B offers a Devil in whom pride, intellect, language, and apostasy do not perish during the plunge into Hell, but remain to form the arsenal with which he will attempt to continue his contest against the Almighty.

The merger of convention and novelty in the Genesis B Devil begins while Lucifer is yet in Heaven. Among the newly created angels the poet describes,

a certain one [God] had made so strong and so powerful in his intellect, so much he allowed him to command, the highest after himself in the realm of the heavens, so dazzling had he made him, so winsome was his person...he was comparable to the incandescent stars. (Gen.B 250-6)

This is Lucifer in all his glory, the "light-bearer" without peer in the Heavenly hosts. However, while the depiction of the first angel's stellar luminosity was always part of the Luciferian tradition because it permitted a visible alteration of his physical self to attend the monstrous perversion of his spirit, thus increasing the striking gravity of his crime and punishment, the emphasis in the first line on Lucifer's intellect is something entirely new. It intimates an equation between intelligence and sin, a trope which the poet more firmly inscribes several lines later, observing how Lucifer "turned [his mind] to his own worse purpose: he began to stir up trouble against the supreme Ruler of heaven who sits upon the holy throne" (259-61). The sin against God that Lucifer conceives in his mind is still rooted in Pride, but the language of Genesis B, in keeping with both its intellectually able angel and its martial, Anglo-Saxon overtures, develops the Biblical cause of Lucifer's fall specifically in terms of a carefully plotted revolt against one's liege. Lucifer declared that his body was radiant and shining, bright and dazzlingly beautiful. He could not find it in his self-esteem to be willing to wait upon
God, his Prince, in a state of fealty. To him it seemed that he had a greater force and strength of fellow-fighters than the holy God could command. Many words of presumption this angel spoke...He declared that his self-esteem persuaded him that he should start building in the west and in the north and fortify the construction. He declared that it seemed to him doubtful that he would remain subordinate to God. (Gen. B 261-70; 272-5)

As in the more traditional versions of the Fall of Lucifer, a portion of the weaker-willed angels hearken to these errant declarations and join Lucifer in his rebellion. While the Medieval tradition makes no more than titular mention of these other angels, Genesis B employs them to continue the intellectual and Anglo-Saxon identifications of Lucifer. "Strong comrades stand by me," the wayward angel ruminates, "heroes hardy of spirit, who will not fail me in the fight. They have chosen me as their master, those confident warriors; with such fellow-fighters one can think out a strategy and with such achieve it" (Gen. B 281-5). Stella Revard, in The War in Heaven, observes that in this speech Lucifer "declares himself a lord in battle and thus, according to the Anglo-Saxon war ethic, a future ruler" (142), and concludes that, "to the Anglo-Saxon mind, it is likely that Lucifer's warmongering appeared an even greater fault than his pride" (142), for such behavior would be clearly read as treasonous, and thereby become associated with the highest crime in any martial society.

This rendition of Lucifer as an angelic war-lord is an intriguing blend of the cultural and Scriptural in Genesis B, but regardless of his fortifications, stratagems, and strong armies, Lucifer still meets a bad end when he strives against his Almighty nemesis. Resuming a more traditional pose, the poem relates how "the mighty and supreme Ruler of heaven grew angered and threw [Lucifer] down from the lofty throne...He banished him then from his favor and threw him down into hell" (Genesis B 298-300; 304-5). The word "banished," implying a verbal command, confirms the God of Genesis B as a figure drawn directly from the Medieval tradition of the patriarchal Lord whose power rests in his
logos. Against Lucifer's rabble of rebel angels, God raises the sword of his omnipotent Word and casts the transgressors from his presence without apparent effort. In the wake of God's command, there follows a somewhat more detailed description of the literal Fall from Heaven and the climate of the waiting Hell than is present in many Medieval works on the topic. *Genesis B* devotes some dozen lines to the conflicting extremes of heat and cold which mark "those deep pits" (*Gen.B* 305) where the fallen angels arrive after their three day plunge through the Void, and the poem's balancing of such new material with the traditional aspects of the story, a trope initiated while Lucifer was yet in Heaven, continues with the defeated insurgent in his new abode.

Considering the new-fallen Devil, *Genesis B* gives attention to the titular transformation traditionally associated with Lucifer's ejection from God's Kingdom when it describes how "the supreme Lord said that [Lucifer] should ever after be called Satan" (*Gen.B* 343-4), a statement which also serves to reinforce the image of God's Will as incarnate in his commanding Word, but it gives barely any treatment to some of the other common aspects of the Devil's Medieval persona. For example, beyond the line: "the presumptuous king who had once been the most radiant of angels" (338), with its admittedly vague allusion to the darkening of Lucifer's Heavenly light, the physical transformation from angel to fiend, referenced so powerfully by the detailed monstrosities that are Dante's and *Tundale’s* Lucifers, is non-existent in *Genesis B*. No mention is made of grotesque features, nor are the Devil's wings figured as definitively avian or vespertian, and while the traditional stasis of Satan is made clear when the Devil complains "bonds of iron encircle me; a halter of chains yokes me" (371), this token description is surpassed by *Tundale’s* mechanized torture device and utterly beggared by Dante's lake of frozen tears, Cocytus.

In place of these physical details, what *Genesis B* does provide in its Satan is a continued emphasis on the diabolic intellect. That mind which in Heaven conceived sin and rebellion will in Hell plot revenge. As in the Medieval cycle dramas, Satan's monologues
dominate the majority of the poem's Hell-scenes. Here, however, the language employed by the Devil is not merely a stage device to illuminate the actions of his performance, but a testament to the darkly purposed mind and resolute pride of the fallen archangel. Mulling his fate, Satan protests,

\[\text{Yet [God] has not done right in having toppled us into the depth of the fire, into this scorching hell, robbed of our heavenly realm - which he has designated to be peopled with humankind. That to me is the greatest of my griefs, that Adam, who was made out of earth, is to occupy my mighty throne and be in bliss. (Gen.B 359-64)}\]

In this passage Satan's spasm of insulted pride at the Heavenly honoring of the man of clay is clearly and effectively portrayed, but it is the initial lines, with their notion that "after the fall Satan has no sense that he has done wrong" (Hill 290), which bear the greater emphasis, for they are both a departure from the Medieval idea of a Devil who was both aware of and repentant for his actions, and the impetus for the reasoning, albeit perverse, which instigates the Fall of Man.\(^1\) As Satan rationalizes,

\[\text{Although [God] cannot charge us with any sin, or that we did him any harm in that country, yet he has cut us off from the light and cast us down into the severest of all punishments. May we not take vengeance for this and pay him back with some harm?...This must we earnestly think upon, that, if ever we can, we should make good our grudge upon Adam and upon his heirs as well. (Gen.B 391-5; 397-9)}\]

So begins the second major portion of Genesis B, the plot to dislodge Man from his Paradisic existence. As in its portrayal of the Fall of the Angels, the poem continues to

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\(^1\) I think especially of Dante's Lucifer, who, while a brilliantly devised foil for God, seems so broken by his contrapasso that he would have been utterly incapable of ever engendering the Fall of Man.
mingle tradition and iconoclasm in its rendering of the Fall of Man, and brings to life an even further developed portrait of the relationship between Evil and the intellect through the machinations of the Devil in the Garden of Eden. The section begins not in Earthly Paradise, however, but in Hell, where Satan, still bound in his iron-fettered stasis, enlists an agent literally to work his will. In good Anglo-Saxon war-lord style, Satan develops terms of reciprocity between himself and the vassal-demon. "If of old I bestowed princely treasures upon any follower," he says, "...then never at a more welcome time could he pay me back with returns for my liberality" (Gen.B 409; 411-2). The "volunteer" is to slip free of Hell, fly to Earth, and somehow depose Adam and Eve from Paradise, a feat for which Satan promises great rewards, including the seat beside his own in the infernal realm (438). The poem's implementation of the lesser devil to carry-out the temptation of man serves three purposes. First, it continues the martial motifs and Anglo-Saxon subtexts by emphasizing the feudal relationship between the liege and his subjects; second, it offers at least an attempted resolution to "the old anomaly that Satan was bound in hell as a result of his fall yet still roamed the world: here Satan is left bound but the minor demons are allowed more freedom" (Russell 141 n.28); and lastly it furthers the idea of intellectual Evil by creating what may be fairly read as a physical embodiment or extension of Satan's will. The poet calls the tempting fiend "an adversary" (442), thus directly linking the lesser demon with the master whose abominable bidding he will carry out through their duplicate name, and in his description of the devil's preparations for his journey emphasizes his "knowledge of plenty of speeches of perverse words" (445-6) and his "strong sense of purpose" (448-9), reminding the reader of the earlier descriptions of Lucifer as he incites riot in Heaven and further developing the parallels between the bound but still volitional Devil and the minor monster who is an extension of that Satanic will.

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2 Satan, from the Hebrew סֵתֶר, or "opponent," is most commonly translated as "adversary."
The preparations of the Tempter serve another purpose as well, for they presage the events in the Garden of Eden. Developing the preparation scene as parallel to the arming of the warrior in Anglo-Saxon literature, Eric Jager notes that, "though arming scenes usually end with a description of the warrior's literal weapon(s), this passage concludes instead with a description of the Tempter's verbal ones [and]...by substituting words...for the usual sword...foreshadows that the Tempter will attack the humans verbally" (Jager 1). This verbal assault is the poem's finest blending of traditional and novel material, for it carries the both the diabolic intellect and Anglo-Saxon feudalism into the Scriptural realm by militarizing the idea of language in the Fall of Man. Satan's Tempter-mediated attack on Adam and Eve is "pre-eminently verbal; it centers on alienating the humans from God's 'word'" (2), the Heavenly logos "with which presumably they are to defend themselves" (3).

The stage has been well-dressed, and a battle of words is precisely the situation which now unfolds in Genesis B. Employing the traditional guise of the serpent, the Tempter approaches Adam and "in his first utterance...began to question him with lies" (Gen.B 494-5). This is another of the poem's innovations that finds its source in the Anglo-Saxon elements of the work. As Jeffrey Russell notes, the biblical account has the serpent approaching Eve directly [but] the Anglo-Saxon audience would have been more comfortable with the idea of a great lord (good or evil) approaching Adam, the lord and master, on important business, rather than his wife. (Russell 140)

In the Serpent's palaver with Adam, the diabolic rhetoric, accounting for more than a score of lines, is the most detailed account of the Temptation of Man in any known Medieval text, and its language involves a complex fraud wherein the serpent, pretending to be an angelic messenger, attempts to gull Adam into eating the Forbidden Fruit by telling him God ordained the action (499). Adam resists, however, "by wielding God's word" (Jager 3), and the Tempter is forced to turn his malevolent tongue against the less
battle-ready Eve. Once again the serpent wields his blade of lies, feigning Heavenly origins and going so far in his cajoling of Eve as to blaspheme: "I am not like a devil" (Gen. B 587). The emphasis on the power of conversant language to persuade is strong in the passage, and the decisive lines, "So he led her on with lies and by cunning coaxed on the woman in that mischief until the snake's thinking began to seethe up inside her...so that she began to let her mind go along with those counsels" (588-92) are resounding in their focus on the linguistic and intellectual aspects of the genesis of Earthly Evil. Eve falls victim to the serpent's words, and the sinful change those words engender in her quite clearly affects her mind, thus drawing a clean parallel between the mental creation of cosmic Evil by Lucifer in Heaven and the similar birth of mortal Evil by Eve's lapse in the Garden. This symmetry between the Devil and Eve, while by no means unique to Genesis B, is furthered in the poem's subsequent description of Adam's fall. Here Eve, in lines that virtually repeat the description of the serpent's tactics against her, "talked to [Adam] repeatedly and coaxed him the whole day towards the dismal act" (684-5). Eve succeeds where the Tempter failed, and Adam ultimately succumbs to her words and joins her in sin.

While Eve's speech is clearly an extension of the perverted logos commanded by the Tempter, the poet elects to make little more than a token issue of his diabolic novelty, and from this point forth, Genesis B resumes a mostly traditional perspective. Passing mention is made of the Tempter's triumphant return to Satan in Hell, but the majority of the focus remains in the Garden of Eden, and the poem's conclusion to the Fall of Man episode falls mainly back on the standard, Scriptural treatment of the material. Eve's excuse, "the snake tricked me, the glittering serpent with his fair words" (987-8), gives a

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3 The association of women and Evil was common in Scripture and Medieval art and literature (see Guillaume d’Orange’s Flohart, and also Grendel’s dam in Beowulf), but Satanic intellect and feminine sin are not so explicitly paired prior to Genesis B.
last emphasis to the perversion of intellect and language to ill-ends, but God's punishment of the transgression, done with the same omnipotent aplomb with which he expelled Lucifer from Heaven, bestows the ultimate emphasis upon the traditional Medieval reading of the affiliation between the *logos* and God. The Divine Word conquers in the end as it did in the beginning, but between these frames *Genesis B* has succeeded in stretching the boundaries of the standardized representation of the Devil. Through its equation of Evil with intellectual, as well as physical monstrosity, the poem develops a "rebellious prince of hell portrayed with such strength and latent sympathy" (Russell 138 n. 21) that he cannot but be seen as a powerful prefiguring of John Milton's even more masterful diabolic representation in *Paradise Lost*.

Some six centuries separate Milton's 1674 poem from *Genesis B*, centuries in which "Satan speaks numerous lines in countless texts, poems, and plays" (Link 169), which do little or nothing to further the character from his Medieval origins. It remains for *Paradise Lost* both to carry on and expand the unwinding of tradition begun in its Anglo-Saxon predecessor. That Milton was aware of the *Genesis B* poem, and very likely wholly familiar with its contents is a matter substantiated by historical documentation. The poem was published in England in 1655 by the "versatile French Huguenot scholar...Francois Junius" (Link 167), in a codex suitably titled the *Junius* manuscript which included with *Genesis B* four other poems of Anglo-Saxon origins. Milton was friends with Junius, and scholars have noted that "the similarities in characterization,

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4 The most remarkable of these, Marlowe's *Faustus*, boasts a Devil who is "neither a tempter nor a liar but instead is starkly blunt" (Turner 166) in his efforts to gain Faustus's soul for his infernal realm, and thus, while superficially similar, is not truly a character of the same lineage as the Satan of *Genesis B* and *Paradise Lost*.

5 Of the other four poems, only *Christ and Satan* has any bearing on the representation of the Devil, and as the character in that poem is merely a more verbose version of the *Genesis B* character, I confine my comments to the latter piece.
mood, and diction [between Paradise Lost and Genesis B] make it plausible that Milton had at least some association with the poem" (Russell 138 n.21). The influence Genesis B may have had on Milton's epic does not impair the overall originality of Milton's work, however, for Paradise Lost far outstrips its precursor in elegance, scope, and grandeur, particularly in its development of Satan, who exhibits in his "magnificently outsized" (Turner 178) character a decidedly unrivaled tension between the standard, Medieval understanding of the Devil and its Renaissance variant.

The general framework of the story aside, critics have long noted the many traditional elements of Milton's poem, including Satan's appearance as "a shadowy copy or blasphemous parody of God" (Forey 303), and the numerical trope wherein "Satan, Sin and Death provide an infernal imitation of the divine Trinity" (303). While these aspects of Milton's Devil are far from unimportant, their overemphasis can tend to obfuscate the more central idea that the "entire concern of Paradise Lost is to confute predestination and demonstrate freedom of will" (Turner 178). In his effort to realize this vision, Milton develops his Archfiend as an amalgam of three distinct aspects: traditional images drawn from Scriptural and Medieval sources, Epic echoes of the Classical poets, and a volitional intellect embellished from Genesis B, and in so doing creates a character who sums in himself a new standard for the literary representation of Evil.

Unlike its every predecessor, Paradise Lost opens not with an image of the untainted, angelic Lucifer, but with a Satan who has already suffered his expulsion from Heaven. As Revard observes, in the entirety of the poem "the prelapsarian Satan does not appear. Never is the 'good' Satan shown; never do we even see him in the throes of conflict" (Revard 49). Indeed, the un-fallen Lucifer exists only via allusions and a few reminiscences, and even these do not sufficiently develop that aspect of the Devil's character. It has been frequently and convincingly argued that the conspicuous absence of an angelic Lucifer from the poem intimates the equivalent absence of any such noble qualities in the mind of Milton's Satan (Carey 139), but it also seems clear that the departure from
tradition in the opening of *Paradise Lost* foreshadows the subsequent development of the iconoclastic Devil. Here, however, one must proceed with a degree of caution, for Milton, while redefining the boundaries of Evil through his depiction of Satan, was well aware that he could not do so within a vacuum. The traditional elements of the Devil were required to be present before they could be challenged, and hence *Paradise Lost* flouts the established opening of the Fall of Lucifer only to begin *in medias res*, as it were, with Satan having burned “nine times the space that measures day and night” (Milton 1:50) in Hell.

Chained upon a blazing lake with the rest of his vanquished insurgents, the Satan of Book I is presented in terms which from the outset both proclaim the Medieval tradition and herald its imminent and almost total re-shaping. Following the long-standing trope that internal monstrosity is reflected in outward deformities, Milton's Satan is described floating on the waters,

in bulk as huge

As whom the fables name of monstrous size,

Titanian, or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,

Briareos or Typhon, whom the den

By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast

Leviathan, which God of all his works

Created hugest that swim th' ocean stream. (Milton 1:196-202)

This gigantic stature, rendered in a passage whose allusions are to other giant-figures (Briareos, Typhon, and Leviathan) who were rebels against their gods,\(^6\) reflects both Satan's own status as chief of the rebel angels, and also figures the inordinate and

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\(^6\) Briareos and Typhon were Titans who warred against Zeus, only to fall to his thunderbolts (see Hesiod and Ovid). Leviathan, mentioned in the book of *Job*, is defeated by the Christian God, and is frequently associated with Satan, especially in his Dragon-guise (Elledge 11 n.197).
misproportioned pride by which Lucifer traditionally fell from Heaven. As Satan frees himself from the aquatic inferno and sets the first foot upon terran Hell, Milton provides a second, more elaborate and telling description of the Archfiend which gathers the traditional ideas of the physically deformed Devil into one of the most magnificent portraits of the fallen angel in all of literature. Satan

above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a tow'r; his form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared
Less the Archangel ruined, and th' excess
Of glory obscured: as when the sun ris'n
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations...Darkened so, yet shone
Above them all th' 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.  (Milton 1:589-604)

Satan's great size is again emphasized, this time through comparison with a tower, but it is the darkening of his physical form, a shadowy departure from the brilliance of his

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7 Likely the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), a Biblical anecdote about excessive pride which parallels the Scriptural treatment of Satan nicely. Milton's allusion is pointed, as usual - the fall of Babel occurs when God strikes common language from the world, and the association in the poem foreshadows Satan's perversion of language in his triumph over Adam and Eve.
prelapsarian existence, which quite literally reflects the absence of God's presence (forever incarnate in the Light) within Satan's fallen spirit, and also the hideous lightning-scars, tokens of his incursion of God's thundering wrath, which together most bespeak the internal fouling of that angel created fairest of them all.

More than simply affirming Milton's character as part of the Devil's Medieval lineage through his physical monstrosity, the lines also bring into play the Satanic qualities which will most allow for the revolutionary reformation of that very tradition which established them. Above his weathered, faded cheeks, Satan's brow remains the throne of Pride, the sin which, "from the fourth century on, was the motive most frequently named" (Revard 59) in the Fall of Lucifer, a tradition from which "Milton in his elaboration of Satanic motive does not dissent" (59). He does, however, embellish, drawing on Genesis B to align Pride with Satan's mind, and confirming that "the first cause of the war in Heaven in Paradise Lost is intellective" (28) in nature. The poem's equation of intellect and sin is most plainly observed in Book II, when Satan, bearing down upon HellGate, encounters "on either side a formidable shape" (Milton 2:649). The shapes, one feminine, the other a tangible shadow, reveal themselves as Sin and Death, and name Satan their father. Elaborating on her birth, Sin says,

In heav'n, when at th' assembly, and in sight
Of all the Seraphim with thee combined
In bold conspiracy against heav'n's King,
All on a sudden miserable pain
Surprised 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,
Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,
Then shining heav'nly fair, a goddess armed
Out of thy head I sprung. (Milton 2:749-58)
Satan's mind, his intellect, begets Sin, and that sin, as mentioned, was Pride. Yet while Milton holds to Medieval tradition in his classification of Satan's sin, he deviates somewhat remarkably from the traditional application of that Pride, creating its advent not in terms of Satan's Scriptural attempt to set his throne above God's, though this does occur in the poem's "war in Heaven," but in an earlier, more intellectually oriented event: Satan's Envy of Christ.

In Book V of Paradise Lost, God assembles the Heavenly hosts and in their presence announces and elevates the Son to his right hand. The Archangel Raphael, relating the tale to Adam, figures Satan's response to the scene as follows:

Satan...great in power,
In favor and pre-eminence, yet fraught
With envy against the Son of God, that day
Honored by his great Father, and proclaimed
Messiah King anointed, could not bear
Through pride that sight, and though himself impaired.

(Milton 5:658; 60-5)

Milton develops his idea for the realization of Satan's innate pride in a spasm of envy from two sources. One is the Latin text Vita Adae et Evae, which termed Satan's pride as the generation of envy not of Christ, but the newly formed man, Adam. Neil Forsyth notes that this reading is problematic, for it "give[s] Satan a far too plausible motivation, since he was indeed senior to Adam and God was violating the established hierarchy by ordering the angels to worship a mere man" (Forsyth 157). Likewise, this version of the myth creates a chronological conundrum, since "Adam's creation...tended more and more to be placed after, not before, the fall of Satan" (157). By transposing Christ and Adam, Milton "solved this problem" (157), and justified his ingenuity through an alliance with the second source, John's Gospel, which "speaks of the devil abiding not in truth from the beginning" (Revard 70), and which the Protestant theologians with whom Milton was most familiar,
understood as a reference to Christ, because "the truth of God can be none other than the Son of God, for only he is the eternal Word" (70). Satan's pride-spawned envy of Christ is thus envy of the _logos_, and reflects the traditional Medieval image of the Devil as the foil of the Word while at the same time foreshadowing the impending Satanic perversion of the _logos_ that dooms Adam and Eve.

Milton's Devil himself confirms, to an extent, Raphael's account of his Sin, and further emphasizes _Paradise Lost_’s equation between intellectual will and envious pride in one of his many memorable speeches. Pondering his defeat by the Almighty, Satan muses:

> who knew
> The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,
> Nor what the potent victor in his rage
> Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
> Though changed in outward luster, that fixed mind
> And high disdain, from sense of injured merit,
> That with the mightiest raised me to contend...
> 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?
> That glory never shall his wrath or might
> Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
> With suppliant knee, and deify his power.  (Milton 1:93-9;105-12)

Here Pride and the volitional intellect are distinctly merged. Satan speaks of his "injured merit," and calls for the willpower never to permit that pride to again be debased. These are Epic tones, figuring the Wrath of Achilles in Book I of Homer’s _Iliad_, and they form the trope through which Milton harnesses Satan's intellect and will to form a Devil who,
unlike his nearly impotent, utterly defeated and despairing models, is vigorous, defiant, and very nearly heroic in his relentless pursuit of his ultimately untenable goals.

Epic images, especially ones associated with Satan, abound in *Paradise Lost*. In Book I, Satan is a most grim echo of Homer's grand Greek, Achilles. His aforementioned speech of injured pride echoes the mood of the Myrmidon prince after his quarrel with Agamemnon in the initial book of the *Iliad*, and his great spear, "to equal which the tallest pine / Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast / Of some great ammiral, were but a wand" (Milton 1:292-4) and "ponderous shield / Ethereal temper, massy, large and round...[which] / Hung on his shoulders like the moon" (1:284-5; 287) are likewise Achilles' weapons of choice in the Trojan Epic. But such Epic allusions do not end with Satan himself. The Council of Infernal Peers in Book II of Milton's poem parallels the Achaean meetings on the plains of Troy, and the fiendishly majestic parade of demons, which so deftly tropes Homer's catalogue of ships in the *Iliad* and prefigures the most Epic portion in all *Paradise Lost*, the War in Heaven.

Dominating the poem's sixth book, Raphael's tale of Satan's rebellion and subsequent expulsion from Heaven is perhaps Milton's most voluptuous embellishment of his precursory materials. Even *Genesis B*, which develops the revolt in more than cursory terms, cannot come close to Paradise Lost's account of that time "when angels [did] with angels war" (Milton 6:92). From the language of the combat, which holds such starkly Classical images as:

> And now their mightiest quelled, the battle swerved,
> With many an inroad gored; deformed rout

---

8 The idea of incarnating Epic symbols and ideals into Satan is not unique to *Paradise Lost*. The Renaissance writers Taubmann, Avecedo, Valvasone, Alfman, and Vondel, among others, made allusions to Classical works in their treatments of the Devil (Revard 1978). None of these, however, can claim the superior detail or richness of style which Milton boasts in his work.
Entered, and foul disorder; all the ground
With shivered armor strown, and on a heap
Charriot and charioteer lay overturned, (Milton 6:386-90)

to the very episodes and actions of the War, which feature such feats as the demolition of
Satan's "deep-throated engines" (6:586) with upheaved mountains, an effort in which "the
loyal angels...distinctly recall the giants who in service to Zeus overwhelm the Titans with
volleys of rock and literally bury them" (Revard 192),9 the verses of Book 6 are wholly
resonant with Epic contexts, and never are these allusions more powerfully applied than in
the figure of Satan himself. As Revard observes,

In Book 6...Satan has his best chance to behave like an epic hero, and at
two points in the action he clearly does. The first occurs when, appearing
upon the field of battle, he issues a general challenge to combat. The
second takes place when, preparing to fight Michael alone, he defends "the
strife of glory" in which he engages his strength. (Revard 220)

The single combat between Michael and Satan is the Epic center of Paradise Lost. In the
encounter, Satan is "the prototype of the epic hero, opposing the loyal archangel...[and]
defending the ethic of heroic battle" (228). Satan's casting of the gauntlet, "meanwhile thy
utmost force, / And join him named Almighty to thy aid, / I fly not" (Milton 6:293-5),
ignites the struggle, in which,

likest gods they seemed,
Stood they or moved, in stature, motion, arms
Fit to decide the empire of great heav'n.
Now waved their fiery swords, and in the air
Made horrid circles; two broad suns their shields

9 The Classical account is from Hesiod's Theogony, lines 713 - 18.
Blazed opposite, while expectation stood
In horror. (Milton 6:301-7)

Satan, of course, loses the contest, but his bold, defiant deed remains the Epic focal-point of the angelic battle, after which, "the war swiftly deteriorates" (Revard 228). Still, the Epic trappings of Milton's Satan allow us to read and remember him not only in the Renaissance light, as "a prince, glorious and unsurpassed, whose ambition caused him to strive above his sphere" (198), but also as a descendant from the Classical tradition, which "afforded its heroes, whatever their arrogance or mistakes in judgement, 'grace' to offend, even as they are called to account for their offenses" (198).

Satan's accounting comes hard. Faced with the blazing majesty of the charioted Christ, the rebel angels are put to the rout and "hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky" (Milton 1:45). The War in Heaven reaches its traditional conclusion, but its component elements are Milton's alone and stand outside of the tradition. In this respect, Paradise Lost's War in Heaven, particularly in its Epic contexts, is critical to both the deconstruction of traditional Evil in literature, and also to the thematic evolution of Milton's poem, for two reasons. First, it represents a weakening of the logos unseen in previous accounts. The command of the Almighty,

    Go Michael of celestial armies prince,
    And thou in military prowess next
    Gabriel, lead forth to battle these my sons
    Invincible, lead forth my armed saints

By thousands and by millions ranged for fight. (Milton 6:44-48)

initiates a maneuver that is "rather remarkable, for in [the precursory texts] God requires no armed assistance to effect Satan's expulsion from Heaven" (Revard 143). Though the poem ultimately upholds its traditional roots, and the logos, embodied in the Son, finally stands triumphant and omnipotent, it is only after much contention. As the Devil becomes increasingly associated with reason and language, so too does the blindly omnibenevolent
characterization of the Word begin to waver in its representational universality, and Milton's War in Heaven may in this light be seen as a portent of the coming paradigm shift which will elevate the Satanic anti-logos above its goodly, Godly counterpart.

Second, and more germane to the study of *Paradise Lost* itself, the Epic contexts offer an opportunity for the development of Milton's postlapsarian Satan as a character who, though Fallen, is not beaten. It is precisely his Epic heroism, twisted though it is towards a dark cause, which combines with his inordinate pride to develop the inner defiance that will permit Satan to continue warring against God, even from the brimstone bowels of Hell.

With Heaven's gates barred behind him, Satan confirms the schism between his formerly angelic self and the utterly ambitious, proudly scornful Devil that he has become as he welcomes Hell:

Farewell, happy fields
Where joy forever dwells: hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, an 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 he
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' 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 heav'n.  (Milton 1:249-63)
Several key components of Satan's character are evident in this speech. The concluding lines are Satan's most powerful declaration of his pride: rather than serve in an inferior position, he would dare damnation to win the glory of Heaven's throne. When he falls, he swiftly determines that he shall rule Hell instead of Heaven. In this embracing of his new kingdom, Satan also brings into play the idea of the Evil intellect. Invoking the power of his will to shape external circumstances, Satan turns his appalling situation to his best advantage. Instead of being contained by Hell's flaming vaults, as was the case for his traditional predecessors, Milton's Devil gathers Hell into himself, an idea the poet figures more plainly in Book IV, writing, "within him hell / He brings, and round about him, nor from hell / One step no more than from himself can fly / By change of place" (Milton 4:20-3). Thus, "it is finally through Satan's bondage to himself that Milton escapes the limitations of a merely physical Hell" (Broadbent 467), for Satan possesses all Hell within the bounds of his powerful mind, and he will use the infernal fires to fuel his unrelenting will to avenge himself on God.

This adamant apostasy is Milton's most triumphant innovation in his treatment of the Devil. As much as Pride and ambition characterize Satan in all his literary incarnations, it is his constancy of volition that separates Milton's Devil from all who have come before. Hell-bent on revenge for his maligned merit, Satan embarks on his crusade to injure God by wrenching Man from his seat in Paradise. His venture through the unknown environs of Hell and out into the black void of Chaos in Book II is Epic in its overtones, but the journey subtly focuses on Satan's will in surmounting the obstacles placed between him and his goal. Milton writes how,

\[
\text{nigh foundered on [Satan] fares,}
\]
\[
\text{Treading the crude consistency, half on foot,}
\]

10 Satan's journey literally mirrors the Underworld ventures of Odysseus and Aeneas: they descend into Hell, Satan rises from therein.
Half flying...So eagerly the Fiend
O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way,
And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.

(Milton 2:940-2; 947-50)

Here the heavy, monosyllabic language of the lines echoes the struggle of Satan to navigate the shifting universe of Chaos, forcing the reader to labor with the Archfiend to complete the passage and thereby subtly emphasizing the link between language and Evil which is a defining characteristic of Milton's iconoclastic Devil.

In spite of these many and strange obstacles, Satan refuses to be swayed from his course, and eventually his determined will sees him through the hectic vale and sets him down upon the Earth. Free of physical Hell and the bizarre environs of the chaotic Void, the Archfiend looks once more upon God's more beautiful realms and is faced with an unexpected challenge to his determination as his sudden recollection of what he has lost enforces the gravitous consequences of his actions. In his most profound soliloquy, issued upon the craggy crest of Mt. Niphates, Satan rails at the sun, which he once surpassed in brilliance, and for a moment laments his rebellious actions and their damming consequences:

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,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heav'n.
O then at last relent: is there no place
Left for repentance, none for pardon left?
None left but by submission; and that word
Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame. (Milton 4:73-83)

Again we see the emphasis on Satan bearing Hell within him, a device by which Milton powerfully both elevates the degree of the Devil's plight and cements the equation between Evil and intellect by having Satan "suffer the searing pain of deprivation rather than physical torment" (Turner 167). But Satan's soliloquy, while generating some sympathy for the Devil, achieves its most tremendous impact in its conclusion. Satan has made his self-awareness plain, but rather than repent or relent, he perverts reason to dismiss these possibilities and bolster his willful appetite for destruction. Still spitting venom at the sun, he fumes:

But say I could repent and could obtain
By act of grace my former state; how soon
Would highth recall high thoughts, how soon unsay
What feigned submission swore: ease would recant
Vows made in pain, as violent and void.
For never can true reconcilement grow
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep...
So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;
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;

As man ere long, and this new world shall know. (Milton 4:93-9;108-13)

This soliloquy to the Sun, a speech "whose antitheses and sharp rhetorical turns parody the classical ode and [create] a rhetorical image of the unbridgeable distance between a heavenly power and an unrepentant Hell" (Parker 45) is the pivotal point in Paradise Lost. The hardening of the Archfiend's mind and heart to his solely evil purpose, which is "the last punishment inflicted on inveterate wickedness" (Broadbent 465), confirms Satan in his
own ceaseless Evil, and is fittingly mirrored by another darkening of his features as "each passion dimmed his face" (Milton 4:114) to reflect the final extinguishing of the last vestiges of anything at all angelic in Satan's nature. Consumed by the infernos of his internal Hell, Satan is unable to turn back to what he once was, and after Book IV exists solely to forge forward in his volitional pursuit of vengeance against the Almighty.

With his bridges thus burned in his wake, Milton's Devil will employ his Satanic volition in conjunction with his evil mind to trick and dissemble his way into Paradise. He has already had the forethought to disguise himself as a lesser angel of light in his encounter with Uriel of the Sun, and now will resort to other guises in a series of transmogrifications which allow the Archfiend to access the Garden unbeknownst to its angelic guardians. Shaped as "a prowling wolf" (Milton 4: 183) Satan bounds over the imposingly tall walls sheltering Eden. Once within, "up he flew, and on the Tree of Life, / The middle tree and highest there that grew, / Sat like a cormorant" (4:194-6), and later, when night has fallen, he is finally discovered by the now alerted angels, who find him "Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve, / Assaying by his devilish art to reach / The organs of her fancy" (4:800-2). The embodiment of the Devil in animal forms serves a dual purpose. On one hand it continues an aspect of the traditional Devil, for the animals employed by Milton are three with which European folklore in the Middle Ages commonly identified the Devil in their effort to further distance his character from God (Russell 67), but on the other it shows Milton again embellishing the traditional images of the Devil, for while the animal forms employed by Milton's crafty Fiend subject him to "debasement or degradation...he retains his inner consciousness despite his disguises" (Carey 133). This is especially true of the toad-form, wherein we see Satan already working his dark plan to tempt Adam and Eve "with more desire to know, and to reject / Envious commands, invented with design / To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt / Equal with gods" (4:523-6) by pouring venomous desires into the dreams of Eve. That the plot to engender rejection of God's command, or logos, is itself carried out by the Archfiend's perversion of
language and assault on Eve's slumbering mind calls up once more the equation between Evil and intellect and at the same time shows the Satanic will as fully functional within his bestial disguise, a fact made resoundingly obvious when, surprised by the touch of Ithuriel's spear, "as when a spark / Lights on a heap of nitrous powder...the smutty grain / With sudden blaze diffused, inflames the air, / So started up in his own shape the Fiend" (4:814-5; 817-9). Revealed in all his darkling glory, Satan confronts Gabriel and the Watcher angels in another of *Paradise Lost's* monumentally Epic moments:

> Th' angelic squadron bright
> Turned fiery red, sharp'ning in mooned horns
> Their phalanx, and began to hem [Satan] round
> With ported spears...
> On th' other side Satan alarmed
> Collecting all his might dilated stood,
> Like Teneriffe or Atlas unremoved:
> His stature reached the sky, and on his crest
> Sat Horror plum'd; nor wanted in his grasp
> What seemed both spear and shield. (Milton 4:977-80; 985-90)

Milton's recollection of the Epic Satan in scenes such as this, which chronologically post-date the events of the War in Heaven, is critical to his conception of the character. While we are denied the imminent combat when Satan, seeing a portent in the stars, flees the untenable field in fury, the image of the armed, angered Archfiend stands powerfully in our minds to remind us that Milton's Satan is, above all else, an embodiment of defiant volition, and also to herald a subtle poetic pattern through which Milton renders that proud, Satanic will as unquenchable and unconquerable. Each time Satan fails in an Epic pursuit, he succeeds in his subsequent venture through an act of will. As when his Epic actions in Heaven gained only his Fall, Satan found the will to rise up out of his fiery defeat, scour Chaos, and discover Paradise, so too does his Epic grandstanding in Eden,
which results in his prudent but galling flight before a celestial sigul, foreshadow his second, ultimately successful attempt to work his will upon the denizens of the Garden.

Following a seven-night period of tactical regrouping in which Satan searches the Earth to locate a creature who "Most opportune might serve his wiles...[one] in whom / To enter, and his dark suggestions hide / From sharpest sight" (Milton 9:85; 90-1), the Archfiend once again assails Eden, and this second venture into the Garden of Paradise is marked from its outset as an exercise in Evil intellect and fiendish volition. After he has selected the serpent as his next bestial disguise, he must negotiate the problem of actually gaining entrance to Paradise again. Unable to breach the more heavily patrolled walls, Satan employs a suitably devious tactic and "by stealth / [Finds] unsuspecting way" (9:68-9) of accessing the hallowed Garden. In a carefully constructed parallel to the story of Wisdom in the book of Ecclesiasticus, Satan slips into the Garden by means of the river Tigris, which

at the foot of Paradise
Into a gulf shot under ground, till part
Rose up a fountain by the Tree of Life;
In with the river sunk, and with it rose
Satan involved in rising mist, then sought
Where to lie hid. (Milton 9:71-6)

The image of the tributary running into Paradise is rendered in Ecclesiasticus as: "I wisdeome...am as an arme of the river: I runne into Paradise as a water conduit" (Forey 308), and Satan's second entrance into Paradise thus figures him as a perversion of Wisdom and strengthens Paradise Lost's continual association of the Devil and Evil with elements of the intellect. Slipping from the waters in a shroud of ebon vapours whose creeping progress through Paradise form "a low dark counterpart of God's cloud-wrapped
passage above it" (Forey 308), Satan continues his quest to un-paradise Adam and Eve by seeking out the sleeping serpent.

In these later stages of Satan's assault on Paradise, Milton's idea of the Devil as an incarnation of destructive volition is given its most powerful treatments in two crucial episodes. The first is the seduction of the serpent, a scene in which both will and intellect are paramount to the furthering of the diabolic cause. Finding the sleeping snake, Satan experiences a moment akin to his despair upon Mt. Niphates, but as before his will to avenge himself overcomes the debasement of his pride at having to assume yet another bestial form to disguise his presence in Paradise. He complains,

O foul descent! that I who erst contended
With gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
That to the hight of deity aspired;
But what will not ambition and revenge
Descend to? Who aspires must down as low
As high he soared, obnoxious first or last
To basest things. (Milton 9:163-71)

Having thus summoned the will to sublimate his pride and permit him the strength to carry out his task, Satan approaches the unsuspecting serpent and

in at his mouth

The Devil entered, and his brutal sense;

In heart or head, possessing soon inspired

---

11 The image of Satan moving as a mist strikes a ringing chord with a later icon of the Devil, Dracula. The vampire is frequently presented in a vapour-form in Stoker's novel, and as I have found no other definitive source for the image in Dracula, it is entirely plausible that the idea was taken from this passage of Milton's poem.
With act intelligential; but his sleep

Disturbed not. (Milton 9:187-91)

The description of the demonic possession makes it clear that Satan has assumed control of the serpent's mental faculties as well as its physical shape, and the serpent's new, evil intelligence will be made manifest in its ability to discourse with Eve on the next morning.

Before Satan can bring his wiles to bear on the innocent woman, however, he must first contend with a final challenge to his will, this one not a wavering of purpose or an assault to his pride, but an almost elemental attack on his very senses by the unearthly splendor of Eve. Descrying Eve alone in her flowery bower, the Serpent approaches and finds himself astonished by her appearance:

her heav'nly form

Angelic, but more soft, and feminine,

Her graceful innocence, her every air

Of gesture or least action overawed

His malice, and with rapine sweet bereaved

His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:

That space the Evil One abstracted stood

From his own evil, and for the time remained

Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed,

Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge. (Milton 9:457-66)

The language of the passage is striking, for it demonstrates once more how fully Paradise Lost supports the idea of intellectual Evil. Eve's superior beauty literally takes Satan's mind from his intent, leaving him "stupidly good." The respite is brief, however, for the Satanic will, ultimately irretardable, swiftly recovers from the lapse:

But the hot hell that always in him burns,

Though in mid-heav'n, soon ended his delight...

Fierce hate he recollects, and all his thoughts
Of mischief, gratulating, thus excites.

"Thoughts, wither have ye led me, with what sweet
Compulsion thus transported to forget
What hither brought us, hate, not love, nor hope
Of Paradise for hell, hope here to taste
Of pleasure, but all pleasure to destroy,
Save what is in destroying, other joy
To me is lost. (Milton 9:467-8; 471-9)

With the diabolic volition having dispatched remorse upon Mt. Niphates, pride before the sleeping serpent, and joy at the sight of Eve's beauty, Satan is now wholly unfettered from even the remotest thoughts of relenting. With no purpose beyond destruction and revenge, he embarks at last upon the final stage of the journey whose sole acceptable end is the Fall of Man.

Satan's temptation of Eve in *Paradise Lost* is an act that blends the total focus of the diabolic will with all the malevolent intellect at the former Archangel's disposal. Like his nearest precursor, the Tempter of *Genesis B*, Milton's Devil finds it is a linguistic manipulation which best suits his needs, and so, after winning Eve's attentions through a fawning display of sinusoidal supplications, the Serpent begins his subtle attack with a barrage of flattery which "into the heart of Eve...made way" (Milton 9:551). Though baited, Eve is not immediately drawn in. She questions the Serpent's ability to speak, creating "a moment that Satan turns to his advantage with what is a dramatic masterstroke by Milton: the serpent speaks specifically about his speaking and attributes this supposedly new power to some as yet unspecified fruit" (Leonard 108):

To satisfy the sharp desire I had
Of tasting those fair apples, I resolved
Not to defer...to pluck and eat my fill
I spared not, for such pleasure till that hour
At feed or fountain never had I found.
Sated at length, ere long I might perceive
Strange alteration in me, to degree
Of reason in my inward powers, and speech
Wanted not long, though to this shape retained.
(Milton 9:584-6; 595-601)

After learning that the mysterious fruit is that which God has forbidden them to eat, Eve summons the *logos* in defense of her position, saying, "But of this tree we may not touch nor touch; / God so commanded, and left that command / Sole daughter of his voice" (9:951-3). But God's Word, whose weakening was foreshadowed during the War in Heaven, falters in the Garden of Eden as Satan usurps the language, twisting Eve's words towards his own evil ends in a speech whose rhetorical brilliance rivals the most masterly of orations. Citing his own existence as proof that the Almighty's injunction that death is the penalty for eating of the Tree is false, the Serpent cajoles Eve to be

Deterred not from achieving what might lead
To happier life, knowledge of good and evil;
Of good, how just? Of evil, if what is evil

Be real, why not known, since easier shunned? (Milton 9:696-9)

The language is perfect. Satan has emphasized the good which can come from eating the fruit, virtually denied, or at least cast doubts upon the actual existence of Evil in a snide parenthesis, and then suggested that, if it does exist, "it would be dangerous for Eve not to know this evil" (Leonard 109).

The dizzying logic proves too much for Eve. The Serpent's "words replete with guile / Into her heart too easy entrance won" (Milton 9:733-4). As John Leonard notes, "the corruption of innocence begins with the corruption of language" (Leonard 110), and Satan's corrupt speech leads in turn to a perversion of the mind of Eve, who in her own bit of wayward reasoning wonders,
What fear I then, rather what know to fear
Under this ignorance of good and evil,
Of God or death, of law or penalty?
Here grows the cure of all, this fruit divine,
Fair to the eye, inviting to the taste,
Of virtue to make wise; what hinders then
To reach, and feed at once both body and mind?  (Milton 9:773-9)

Corruption of thought then leads to corruption of action, and "a taste that puts an end to
thought precipitates the fall" (Kerrigan 111).

This is the climax of Paradise Lost; the remaining three books of the poem are
devoted to the lengthy denouement, and in most respects follow the traditional material
which formed the framework for Milton's masterpiece. There is, however, still the matter
of Satan. Like the poet of Genesis B, who gave a short passage detailing the Tempter's
return to Lucifer, Milton does not allow his Devil simply to vanish back into the darkness
from whence he came, but follows him home to Hell. The purpose of continuing to pursue
the steps of Satan is threefold. First, it was an area of the story that, much like the War in
Heaven, was very little treated by prior authors, and so allowed Milton to fill yet another
gap in the history of the decline of Paradise. Second, it offered an opportunity to give final
emphasis to those novel characteristics which broke Milton's Satan away from his
Medieval mold. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it provided the logos-elevating
closure to the episode which the poem's traditional skeleton in the end required.

In Book X, we are presented a portrait of Satan as he returns from his successful
gambit in Paradise. He is once again disguised "in likeness of an angel bright" (Milton
10:327), but as Margaret Forey notes, "his power to so present himself seems to be
waning, since Sin and Death, who are busy at the edge of the universe making their bridge
fast, see him approaching and 'soon' penetrate his disguise" (Forey 313). This inability of
Satan to wield his powers effectively foreshadows the ultimately traditional defeat which
will be thrust upon him when God finally reasserts the potency of his Word, but before that occurs, Milton affords us one last series of glimpses of the Archfiend in all his evil majesty.

Returning to the now metropolitan Hell as the archetypally Epic "great adventurer from the search / Of foreign worlds" (Milton 10:440-1) Satan twice more employs his ability to alter his shape, first navigating the infernal city "in show of plebian angel militant" (10:442), and then passing through the great hall of Pandemonium in a state of invisibility. Unseen upon his throne, he continues to recall his Epic nature in a revelation which mirrors that of Odysseus returned to plague the suitors in the Odyssey. Elevating the aspect of his Devil one final time, Milton writes:

At last as from a cloud his fulgent head
And shape star-bright appeared, or brighter, clad
With what permissive glory since his fall
Was left him...All amazed
At that so sudden blaze the Stygian throng
Bent their aspect, and whom they wished beheld,
Their mighty chief returned: loud was th' acclaim. (Milton 10:449-55)

The invisible entrance and sudden appearance, "presented by Milton as a dramatic event...at the climax of [Satan's] return journey" (Forey 314), while a last token of the character's Epic elements, also continues the anti-progress of Satan towards his traditional fate. The event is a clear "parody of the resurrection appearances to the disciples congregated behind closed doors" (314), and shows Satan returning to his Medieval status as a polar opposite of God. Further retreat along these lines is demonstrated in Satan's final speech, which rings with pride in his deceitful victory in Eden and shows that Milton's Devil, for all his volition and intellect, is ultimately unable to escape final association with his own original sin.

He is likewise unable to escape his second judgement.
Hard on the heels of these foreshadowings comes Milton's vindication of the Word. Expecting a rousing ovation for his deeds, Satan is greeted by a "dismal universal hiss" (Milton 10:508). The Archfiend is afforded little leisure to wonder at this event, for instantly he is himself transformed into "a monstrous serpent on his belly prone, / Reluctant, but in vain, a greater power / Now ruled him, punished in the shape he sinned" (10:514-6). That power is the logos. Though Milton deviates from the Scriptural accounts by allowing Satan to escape the Garden before his punishment, he does so only to increase the omnipotence of the traditional Word by having God's command cross the oceans of Chaos and plumb the very fathoms of Hell to fall like a silent thunderbolt upon his unsuspecting foe. The metamorphosis of Satan, and the other demons with him, into serpents, "comes not merely to humiliate Satan in his moment of triumph, but to put that triumph into perspective" (Revard 273). In testament to what is the ultimate irony of Satan's entire rebellion, the enforcing of God's Word and the Divine will through the serpentine transmogrification into the dragon of Revelation demonstrates that, regardless of his actions, Satan "exists only in relation to his Creator; when he supposes himself to be acting most freely, he is in fact bound and contained by the actions of the Redeemer" (Forey 316).

Thus, at the conclusion of Paradise Lost, God's logos stands supreme. Gone is the image of Satan the heroic rebel; gone the strikingly sinister equation between Evil and intellect which spawned the perversion of language and reason; gone the resounding, earthquake force of that titanic volition to never yield, never bend. Gone all, but not forgotten. Though he attempted to conform to the general requirements of the tradition in his composition of Paradise Lost, Milton failed in this one respect: he created a Devil whose magnitude of character overshadows the very work of which he is a part. In a second irony that is somehow more caustic than the intentional irony of Milton's ending, few readers of the poem even remember the Satanic transformation episode of Book X, but the majority can and do recall the iconoclastic qualities which Milton so potently
infused in his Devil. Consider the Romantics, who as a group were probably more influenced by Milton than any other writer. What do they say of Satan? Blake, forefather of the movement, associated Satan's central egotism with the positive concept of the Self that is so integral to Romanticism in this line from his poem *Milton*: "I in my Selfhood am that Satan!" (Blake 167), and Byron, whose works *Manfred* and *Cain* both bear great debts to Milton, attested sympathetically to the fallen humanity of *Paradise Lost's* Devil, observing that "[Milton] certainly excites compassion for Satan, and endeavours to make him out an injured personage - he gives him human passions, too, makes him pity Adam and Eve, and justify himself much as Prometheus does" (Byron 522), before coming to the conclusion that, especially when viewed from the Epic perspective, Satan is "the hero of *Paradise Lost*" (522). Similarly, Percy Shelley, author of his own Satanic verses, *Prometheus Unbound*, "claimed Satan as a semi-Promethean, or flawed hero, whose character engenders in the reader's mind a pernicious casuistry of humanist argument against theological injustice" (Bloom 5), and even went so far as to find in Milton's Archfiend "a moral being...far superior to Milton's God" (5).

These are resonant declarations of the incredible impact of Milton's Satan, especially in light of the poet's statement that the general intention of his work was to "justify the ways of God to men" (Milton 1:26), for after *Paradise Lost* it is the conception of incarnate Evil, and not the understanding of Eternal Divinity which, as the Romantic response alone attests, is never again the same. Though wrought within the scaffolding of Medievalism, Milton's Devil challenges the traditional representations on which the character was founded. His incredible governance of language, whether in Epic declarations or tantalizing temptations, has effectively usurped both the power and function of the Divine *logos*, creating a tension between images old and new and reinventing the standard for the iconography of Evil. With the lines of the traditional binary thus blurred, it is easy to see why Blake, Byron, and Shelley could recognize such noble, heroic, even God-like, if not Godly, characteristics in Milton's Satan.
Proud, Epic, and dangerously intelligent, this Renaissance Devil's adamant defiance buffets *Paradise Lost* with the winds of systemic disruption. Against this incessant assault, the polarized standard so promulgated by the poem begins to fold upon itself, and in spite of Milton's assertions to the contrary, leaves an indelible image of a Devil much departed from the fetters of the Medieval tradition. *Paradise Lost* may profess to celebrate triumph of the Deific over the diabolic, but this is ultimately a hollow victory, for though Satan is still unable to avoid his Fall from Heaven, he never succumbs to the strictures of this defeat. Rather, in the infernal furnace of the Archfiend's mind, as in the acclaim of generations of readers who have been gathered like moths to its iconoclastic flames, the Satanic will to rebel against tradition, structure, and standards continues to burn unceasingly on.
"Knavery's Plain Face:"
*The Satanic Embodiment in Shakespeare*

Fair is foul and foul is fair.

- William Shakespeare

Regardless of the utility of an incarnate image of the Devil in serving both as an origin and perpetuator of all universal ills, man has always related best to Evil when it comes couched in human terms. Hence the existence of the Satanic embodiment, a monstrous, marginal, yet somehow more earthly, and therefore accessible, manifestation of those malevolent traits eternally woven in the cosmic Devil.¹ Like their incarnate progenitors, these embodiments are not static; in fact, their deviations from their original form are often much more profound than those of the Satanic incarnations, for the Satanic embodiment is bound by the fluid terms of human society and not by the stone-carved, traditional verses of the Scripture. It is for this reason that, in considering the shifting nature of the Satanic embodiment, we find changes not only in the representation of the Devil, but in the entire paradigm of Good and Evil - changes foreshadowed, but never fully realized in the texts that treat only the Satanic incarnation.

¹ Though the Satanic embodiment need not be read as an "anti-Christ" figure in the Scriptural sense of the term, it should be acknowledged that such diabolic characters are very much dark versions of the same principle by which Christ is seen as the Word made flesh, or God incarnate in a human form, and always function to some extent in tension with this idea.
As was the case with the Satanic incarnation, the changes in the perception of the Satanic embodiment evolved in response to a Medieval standard of representation. The monster of the Middle Ages was a physical delineation of those abstract traits which were considered marginal, or unacceptable within the parameters of social intercourse. To make this distance between monstrous behavior and human behavior plainer, the Medieval monster was rendered as a thing of gross physical deformities whose habitat was a place of wild desolation markedly isolated from the social bastions of men. Gradually, however, this standard begins to deteriorate. As was the case with the incarnate image of the Devil, the chief source of the erosion is the philosophic revolution of the Renaissance. The necessity for a Satanic embodiment to be overtly monstrous, that is, to testify to its evil through physical malformities and exile from human society, shifts towards a new type of character whose monstrosity is exemplified not by its isolation from man, but by its anti-social behavior while interacting within the bounds of civilization. This creature, often as fair of face and speech as it was foul of spirit and intention, is best exemplified in Renaissance literature by Iago, the villainous ensign of William Shakespeare's tragedy of the Venetian moor, *Othello*.

Shakespeare does not reach the portrait of Evil that is Iago by accident, nor does he simply create the malicious soldier in a breath of volcanic inspiration, shattering the traditional Medieval representation of the Satanic embodiment with what amounts to a single dramatic thunderbolt. Rather, Iago is the product of an almost experimental treatment of Evil which spans several of Shakespeare's last plays. In *The Tempest* and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare gives resonant portrayals of evil characters which, viewed as a group along with *Othello*, can demonstrate the erosion of the Medieval tradition and the rise of the Renaissance conception of the diabolic character in Iago.  

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2 Several of Shakespeare's other "great" villains, notably Richard III, Edmund of *King Lear*, and Claudius of *Hamlet*, are excluded from this chapter not because they are less evil than Caliban, Macbeth or Iago, but because their characters are not evoked in terms
Though chronologically the last of Shakespeare's completed compositions, it is with *The Tempest* that the consideration of the representation of Evil in the plays must begin, for it presents the most typically Medieval expression of the Satanic embodiment: Caliban, the indigent of that mysterious island which comes to be ruled by the magician Prospero after the latter's exile from his dukedom of Milan. Critics have gnashed their teeth over Caliban since the first production of *The Tempest* in 1611; and the character has proved a slippery one for any theory to apprehend fully. While occasionally one discovers an interesting attempt to illuminate Caliban, such as Marjorie Garber's tracing of the character back to the Minotaur, another "half-man, half-beast who preys on virgins" (Garber 59), the overwhelming critical trend has been to portray Caliban not as villain, but victim. As early as the 1870's, Caliban was figured as an icon bewailing the abuses of slavery, and subsequent criticism, taking this as Gospel, has produced such readings of Caliban as representing Native Americans, Polynesian cannibals, and most recently, in the New Historicism and post-colonial trend, as an allegory for all races enslaved in the face of Imperialism.\(^3\)

Doubtless these views all have degrees of validity, but in their fervor to assimilate Caliban into cultural criticism, they have migrated somewhat away from the fact that Shakespeare's island denizen is a monster, and quite a diabolic monster at that. Considering Caliban in light of the traditional Medieval tenets of monstrosity exposes a character who might have been equally at home in one of Dante's cantos or a passage of *Beowulf* as in an act of Shakespeare's play. To begin, Caliban bears the requisite physical

deformities associated with a monster, though those deformities are not particularly easy to define, for his shape is "an aggregation of odd parts, half man, half fish, with fins like arms with long, sharp fingernails for digging, perhaps with a receding forehead like a puppy or a cat, and the earthbound appearance of a tortoise" (Draper 91). The confusion of the critics regarding the monster's appearance is a symptom of the confusion of the characters when dealing with Caliban, for even Trinculo, who has the closest contact with the monster, cannot define his form with complete specificity. He wonders if the thing he has stumbled across is

a man or a fish?
dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish; a very ancient
and fishlike smell; a kind of not of the newest poor-John.
A strange fish...Legged like a man!
and his fins like arms! (Tem.II.ii.24-7; 32-3)

Whatever the precise details of the islander's physique, Shakespeare makes it plain that Caliban is not human, or at least not wholly human, and his physical alienness renders him a clear throwback to the Medieval monster, whose hideous form heralded it as a "non-human symbol of human iniquity" (Vaughn 392). 4

Caliban's iniquities, his inability to comport himself with even partial humanity when confronted with the rigorous strictures of human society, are intimated throughout The Tempest as endemic to his nature, and more specifically as products of his heritage. Prospero, discoursing with the angelic Ariel, names Caliban "a freckled whelp, hag-born...not honored with / a human shape" (Tem.I.ii.283-4), and later calls the monster to his face a "poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam" (I.ii.320-1).

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4 I am reminded in particular of Beowulf's Grendel, whose physical monstrosity, also unspecified, infers a partially amphibian or reptilian form much like Caliban's, and whose isolation and violent reaction to human society Caliban mirrors in his own actions throughout the play.
Caliban's mother is Sycorax, an Algerian witch herself banished to the island, where she eventually dies, leaving her strange son to be found by Prospero upon his arrival. The devil referred to as Caliban's sire, in keeping with the Christian "tradition that false gods are to be identified with devils" (Latham 152), is most likely Setebos, the pagan deity worshipped by Sycorax. By bestowing a quasi-demonic ancestry on Caliban, Shakespeare extends the inherently Medieval idea that physical monstrosity is merely an echo of an internal deviance, and this idea becomes even more manifest in light of the island creature's actions.

After his initial exposure to Prospero and the human civilization he represents, Caliban demonstrates his inability to exist within the parameters of such a society by attempting to rape the magician's daughter, Miranda. It is a crime for which Caliban does not repent, saying "Would't had been done! / Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (Tem.I.i.485-50), and for which he suffers immediate expulsion from Prospero's home. This exile, a second feature drawn from the Medieval vision of the monster, is a punishment which Caliban rails against, saying "you sty me / In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me / The rest o' th' island" (I.ii.341-3). Harold Bloom notes this episode as an indicator of Caliban's nature which is critical to the progression of the play. He finds that the monster "can be controlled and chastened by Prospero's magic art, but he is recalcitrant" (Bloom 5). This recalcitrance serves to further the associations between Caliban and the diabolic archetype, for as the play continues, we soon enough find Caliban engaged in that most devilish of misdeeds: insurrection.6

5 The etymology of Caliban's name is "bane of beauty" (Berger 17), a title the monster tries to literalize in his behavior towards Miranda.

6 The Medieval archetype for reading insurrection as a diabolic sin rests in Dante's Inferno, where propigators of this crime are punished with the other Traitors against their Lieges, most notably Lucifer himself, in Judecca, the innermost section of Hell's frozen nether-circle, Cocytus.
When the vice-ridden Stephano and Trinculo stumble across Caliban, the monster quickly ingratiates himself into their favor with promises of dominion over the island if they will depose Prospero. The language employed by Caliban is striking. He says first, "I'll yield [Prospero] thee asleep, / Where thou mayst knock a nail into his head" (Tem. III.ii.59-60), and then elaborates,

Why, as I told thee, 'tis a custom with him
I' th' afternoon to sleep; there thou mayst brain him,

Having first seized his books, or with a log
Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,

Or cut his wessand with thy knife. (Tem.III.ii.84-8)

With the possible exception of Cornwall's attack on Gloucester's sight in *King Lear*, these are the most graphic and violent lines of physical abuse penned by Shakespeare. The lines do not indicate a simple, animalistic response to a situation, but ring almost rejoicingly with tones of premeditated pain and suffering for Prospero. They are indicative of a nature so savage that, as Miranda aptly observes, "any print of goodness will not take" (I.ii.352), and condemn Caliban not as misunderstood, but as essentially corrupt and Evil.

Caliban's desire to have Prospero deposed and murdered combines with his physical deformities and his isolation to finalize the link between Shakespeare's island monster and his diabolic Medieval archetype. Though Caliban's plot is topically different from Lucifer's attempt to surpass God in that Caliban seeks no gain for himself beyond vengeance while Lucifer sought to sit upon the throne of Heaven, any act of violent insurrection, particularly when directed at a monarch, must always hearken in its essence back to the Scriptural War in Heaven, and Prospero, who is moved to true anger only when he recalls the uprising in an aside: "I had forgot the foul conspiracy / Of the beast

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Caliban and his confederates / Against my life" (Tem.IV.i.139-41), cements the reading of Caliban as a Satanic embodiment with his exclamation,

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick: on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost!
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. (Tem.IV.i.189-92)

Following this explosion of ire comes Prospero's declaration of retaliation: "I will plague them all, / Even to roaring." (Tem.IV.i.192-3). The text's "ethical and symbolic reduction of Caliban to a figure of pure evil" (Berger 19), coupled with Prospero's promise of revenge for this latest scheme and his previous punishments of the monster's misdeeds develops a binary between the two characters which places Caliban at the pole of Evil and opposes him with Prospero at the seat of Good.

Just as Caliban expresses the Medieval understanding of the Satanic embodiment, so too does Prospero demonstrate the relevant traits of its Deific counterpart, blending into a single entity characteristics of both the Old and New Testament God. Attended by the angelic sprite Ariel, Prospero is best characterized for the majority of the play through his potent employment of language to command his magic art, which Caliban attests is "of such pow'r / It would control my dam's god, Setebos, / And make a vassal of him" (Tem. I.i.373-5). In this magical action, Prospero is like the God of Genesis and the other Old Testament books, wielding his omnipotent logos to create or to destroy, as he sees fit. In Act V, however, when he has his enemies at his disposal, we see not cruelly dispatched justice, but the leniency of a magnanimous Prospero who finds that "the rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance" (V.i.27-8). In sparing his thwarted foes, Prospero has come "out of the Old Testament into the New" (Garber 57), and achieved that almost paradoxical "secularized spiritual authority" (Bloom, Shakespeare. 674) which comes through the New Testament virtue of mercy.
The strongest testimony towards reading the binary of Good and Evil in Prospero and Caliban, however, comes not simply from Prospero’s employment of language and power, but from Caliban’s misuse of these things. While the magician’s words are laced with potency and can command, the monster’s words are futile, empty gestures. As Caliban himself attests to Miranda and her father, "You taught me language, and my profit on’t / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!" (Tem.I.ii.363-5). The higher faculties of reason and logic, extensions of the Divine logos, are inaccessible to Caliban, whose thoughts and actions are constantly dominated those bestial appetites which render him monstrous and marginalize him to human society. Even his finest speech:

Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop on me, that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again. (Tem.III.ii.132-40)

is for all its apparent beauty but a pretty mask concealing what is essentially the greedy fantasy of an avaricious nature, and not, as many scholars have read it, a display of "the most transcendental, the most poignant, and the most natural urges of man" (Berger 17). Caliban’s appreciation of the island is figured in primarily sensual terms which culminate in an image of the clouds pouring wealth upon the monster. Such treasures, material symbols
of success in human society, are perpetually denied to the marginal Caliban, who weeps in acknowledgment of his punitive isolation and yet remains incapable of civil intercourse.⁸

Similarly, as he employs language solely to curse Prospero and express the baseness of his nature, so too does Caliban abuse the little power he does possess. Given a place in Prospero's home, he returns the favor by attempting to ravish Miranda, and later uses his knowledge of the "qualities o' th' isle" (Tem.I.ii.337) to barter with Trinculo and Stephano in the plot to murder Prospero. Finally, where Prospero is in a position to dispense mercy at the conclusion of the play, Caliban can only grovel and beg that such action be bestowed upon him, and thus acknowledges "[Prospero's] supremacy - both temporal and mystical" (Bloom Shakespeare. 670) over all who step into the universe of his island-realm.

In spite of the obvious polarities between the two characters, the play makes it evident that Caliban and Prospero remain intimately linked by the very standards they each represent, a truth to which Shakespeare's magus attests when he says of Caliban at the end of the play, "this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (Tem.V.1.275-6). The closing reference both calls up the Medieval belief that Evil existed solely because God permitted it to be so, and also offers a reminder that the binary opposition between Prospero's logocentric Good and Caliban's treacherous but impotent Evil binds the two irrevocably through its very delineation of the differences between them. This clean, precise, Medieval rendition of both the Satanic and Deific embodiments, however, is not the norm when considering Shakespeare's portrayal of Good and Evil in his plays. Such standards as The Tempest boasts are too intractable for the artist whose "great topos is changeability" (Bloom Cat. 4), and it is precisely this capacity for change, for fluidity in the

⁸ In keeping with the Medieval roots of Caliban's diabolic characteristics, this behavior resonates well with the behavior of Beowulf's Grendel, another Satanic embodiment who "could not touch the treasure-throne" (Beowulf 168) in Heorot.
representation of even the most seemingly intractable ideas, which will allow Shakespeare to explode the standard rendition of the Satanic embodiment and replace it with something of an even more sinister nature.

In *Macbeth*, we find one aspect of this alteration. The "Scottish Play" presents an apocalyptic vision of a kingdom disrupted by the murderous ambitions of the Thane of Glamis and his Lady. Within this wasteland, Evil appears in two guises: supernatural and natural. The first of these, embodied in the trio of witches, is a traditional representation drawn very much from the precursory images of the diabolic, and bears only brief exposition. That witches and witchcraft were associated with the Devil during both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is well-documented. Garry Willis, in his engaging study of *Macbeth*, makes plain the seventeenth century view on the matter, observing, "those who believed in witchcraft thought it was a permanent feature in history, [existing] since its master tempted Eve in Eden" (Willis 68), and the play offers abundant evidence that the witches, like Caliban, may be read as Satanic embodiments in the most Medieval sense of the term. They possess the requisite physical defects, as Banquo attests when he wonders in astonishment:

What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire
That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth
And yet are on 't? Live you, or are you aught
That man may question?...You should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are,  (*Mac*.I.iii.39-43; 45-7)

and also, through their prophecies, reflect the quintessential aspect of the *Genesis* Devil by acting as "malign forces of temptation" (Felperin 92) for "great Glamis" (*Mac*.I.v. 52). In the full scope of the play's representation of the binary between Good and Evil, however,
they are interesting not so much for themselves as for the way they serve to illuminate the darkness hidden in the drama's second Satanic embodiment, Macbeth.

The drama's titular tragic villain, while still tied to the Medieval standard, clearly shows Shakespeare's stretching of that tether, for there are no physical manifestations of Macbeth's inward Evil. With overt monstrosity confined to the three hags, Shakespeare must employ a clever series of alternate devices to convey the sense of Macbeth as a representation of the diabolic. The earliest of these, though not necessarily the most overt, comes through a verbal linkage between Macbeth and the witches. As they depart the stage to conclude Act I, Scene i, the crones say "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (Mac.I.i.11), only to have the line echoed by Macbeth's first words, "So fair and foul a day I have not seen" (I.iii.38). From this deft foreshadowing, Shakespeare proceeds to develop his Scot as a Satanic embodiment through a variety of speeches, actions and allusions.

Macbeth himself strengthens his relation to the three witches and their dark arts when, on the doorstep of Duncan's murder, he says: "Witchcraft celebrates / Pale Hecate's offerings" (Mac.II.ii.51-2), but throughout the play he is most frequently identified by the other characters not with the witches, but with devils or even the Devil. His wife, plotting the murder with him, advises, "look like th' innocent flower, / But be the serpent under 't" (I.v.63-4), in what is a clear reference to the Temptation in Eden, while Malcolm and Macduff, during their forced sojourn in England, name him variably: "Devilish Macbeth" (IV.iii.117) and "this fiend of Scotland" (IV.iii.233), and most resoundingly conclude, "Not in the legions / Of horrid hell can come a devil more damned / In evils to top Macbeth" (IV.iii.56-8). Even Inverness, the castle wherein the treacherous murder occurs, is enlisted in the process of revealing the demonic visage behind Macbeth's painted face,

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9 It should be noted that Macbeth appears to have at least one abnormal physical trait, his great strength (see I.ii. 22), but superhuman strength is not necessarily a Satanic trait - consider Beowulf or Roland for examples to the contrary - and is certainly not of the same vein as the physical deformities which characterize the other versions of the Medieval strain.
for its great doors may be read as "a 'hell-gate' [complete] with its attendant 'devil-porter'" (Felperin 93) whose famous quip "I pray you remember the porter" (Mac.i.iii.22) is both a coarse attempt to ply a gratuity from Macduff and a subtle warning to any entering the abode of Macbeth.

It is within the walls of this infernal palace that Macbeth, through his own voice and hand, will be most fixed as a Satanic embodiment whose sin and the crime it spawns are both directly descended from the Medieval archetype of the Devil. Like Lucifer, Macbeth's flaw is his pride, which Shakespeare figures in terms of the Scot's boundless ambition. Having heard the proclamation of the witches brought partially to fruition in the royal decree that he inherit the title of Cawdor, Macbeth murmurs, "Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor - / The greatest is behind" (Mac.i.iii.116-7), giving first voice to his secret desire to be himself enthroned as monarch of Scotland in a line that is rich with echoes of the Medieval Lucifer aspiring to gain God's Heavenly seat. Duncan's royal chair is an end to which any means are acceptable for Macbeth, and as he paces the chambers of Inverness, pondering the employment of murder to quench his "lust for power" (Knights 39), he openly admits the degree to which his Pride-spawned ambition dominates his character, saying

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th' other. (Mac.I.vii.25-8)

Ever characterized by its "inherent opposition to heredity and the established order" (Watson 134), ambition becomes the catalyst for insurrection, treachery, and ultimately murder. To this end, Macbeth is aided by his fiendish queen, who in her own stony ambitions becomes the most effective external symbol of Macbeth's Pride in the play. Awaiting his return, she says:

Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valor of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,  (Mac. I. v. 23-6)
and later, when she finds her husband, in what is another subtle Shakespearean departure
from the strict standards of the Medieval archetype, vacillating in his resolve and purpose,
she "plays on [Macbeth's] weakness by calling him a coward" (Hobson 174):

Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valor
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'
Like the poor cat i' th' adage?  (Mac. I. vii. 39-45)

Duly shamed, Macbeth snaps "I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more
is none" (I. vii. 47-8) and from there embarks upon the regicide, that most diabolical crime
which figures Lucifer's similar but failed attempt to dethrone God in Heaven.

Spurred by his devilish Pride, the Thane of Glamis and Cawdor gains his dark
triumph, lifting to his brow the bloodied crown of Scotland, and embarking on the
tyrrannous reign which forever imprisons him as a Satanic embodiment, for "tyrants are by
their very nature Lucifer's children, and not God's, and as such they are damned" (Felperin
97). Effecting this damnation for Macbeth are Malcolm and Macduff, the two men who
have been most grievously wronged by the tyrant's actions, the former losing a father, the
later a family. In their united cause, the pair become the Deific embodiment of the play's
"restorative movement" (Felperin 92), opposing Macbeth's Satanic nature, and bearing out
the traditional dualism of Good and Evil. While the tyrant is:

bloody,

Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, [and] smacking of every sin

That has a name,  (Mac.IV.iii.56-9)

Malcolm and Macduff, combined as a "counter-[weight] pitted against Macbeth" (Willis 124), are celebrated by their expression of such

king becoming graces

As justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness,

Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,

Devotion, patience, courage, [and] fortitude.  (Mac.IV.iii.91-4)

In keeping with the established tradition, these Deific virtues will meet and conquer Macbeth's Satanic sin, and to herald this restitution of order and harmony to the play's universe, Shakespeare gives us in Act V his most intricate version of Macbeth as both drawn from and in tension with the Medieval archetype of the diabolic.

With his wife slain by her own hand, his armies smashed and his castle sieged to its knees, the Macbeth of the play's last scenes demonstrates the severity of the penalty he has paid for his Satanic ambition. The world around him, where life itself is "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (Mac.V.v.26-8), has become for Macbeth a most profound version of Hell, and it is here, on the battlefields of this infernally distorted Scotland, that we witness the devilish King's blending of simple Luciferian tyranny and complex Shakespearean tragedy. Cornered by Macduff, Macbeth cries, "Of all men else I have avoided thee. / But get thee back! My soul is too much charged / With blood of thine already" (V.viii.4-6). These lines are evidence of a remarkable and "unsuspected reserve of sympathetic and spontaneous humanity" (Felperin 102) which makes Macbeth a devil who, while aware he is wholly beyond undoing his sinful actions, is not beyond regretting what his Pride has wrought. Like Dante's Lucifer, who weeps eternally for an angelic paradise forever lost, Macbeth demonstrates a deeply tragic understanding of the immense gravity of his deeds. But his self-knowledge, though building throughout the play, emerges too late, and Macbeth, whose existence was defined
by his boundless Pride, finds that he must die as he lived. "I will not yield / To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet" (V.viii.27-8), he says to Macduff's terms of surrender, preferring the soldier's death to a life of humiliation and thus departing from the eternal torments which render the Medieval Devil a baffled and chastised opponent of the Almighty.\(^\text{10}\) His last lines, "Before my body / I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff, / And damned be him that first cries 'Hold, enough!'" (V.viii.32-4) hearken back in a glorious flash to the unfallen Macbeth of the play's opening scenes, reminding us that while the tradition of the Scottish tyrant's villainy is clearly Satanic, its tragedy is all too human.

It is this final, unavoidable humanity that, much more than their physical discrepancies, defines the degree of separation between Macbeth and Caliban. While both characters are strongly rendered from the traditional image of the Satanic embodiment, Macbeth clearly carries the burden of that Luciferian sin to a more human level than the malformed, malignant island monster could ever aspire. Ultimately, however, the thunder of Macbeth's heroic defiance is silenced by the ending of the play. When Macduff presents Macbeth's severed head to Malcolm, it is not the "sound and fury" of the tyrant's stand which Shakespeare permits us to recall, but the demonic evil of the "dead butcher" (Mac.V.viii.69); an evil which, in the end, cannot hold against the tide of good that will see "[Malcolm] crowned at Scone" (V.viii.75). This coronation of Duncan's son restores order and harmony to Scotland in a motion which elevates the principles of the traditional logos once more to their position of dominance in the standard representational system and concludes the play with the affirmation that "the time" is indeed "free" (V.viii.55). Thus Macbeth, like The Tempest, celebrates and reinforces the traditional tenets of the dualism between Good and Evil, and the Scottish Play, for all the marked tensions its

\(^{10}\) In this respect, Macbeth must be acknowledged as something of a precursor to Milton's Satan, who also faces his damnation with stubborn heroism.
humanized Satanic embodiment strikes with the more patently Medieval expressions of Prospero's tale, is finally only a prophetic shadow of the deeper darkness that is revealed in Shakespeare's complete reshaping of both the diabolic character and the binary of Good and Evil in Othello.

The tragedy of the Moor of Venice is a play about confusion. In the course of its action, loyalties are confounded, morals devalued, beliefs, customs, and judgments all condemned to obfuscation, but one aspect which remains crystalline in its clarity, at least from an external perspective, is which character bears the mantle of the Satanic embodiment. In fact, to find this creature, one need look no farther than the cast of characters, where it lists "Iago, [Othello's ancient,] a villain." ¹¹ This titular appendage is present in no other of Shakespeare's major tragedies: Macbeth is listed among the "Noblemen of Scotland," Claudio enthroned as "King of Denmark," Edgar given as the "Bastard Son of Gloucester," and even Brutus and Cassius are called only "Conspirators against Caesar." None of these men are presented from the outset as regicides, fratricides, hatemongers, or assassins; none are so unequivocally affiliated with Evil as is Iago, and this is fitting, for none of them encapsulate Evil with quite the same totality that Iago does.

As such, one may expect the diabolic associations surrounding the General's malificent Ensign to be many, and Shakespeare does not disappoint. As Mark Rose notes, "the word 'devil' occurs in its various forms more often [in Othello] than in any other Shakespeare play" (73). Iago himself invokes such words a dozen times in the play, and has the particular label of "devil" reflected back at him on two defining occasions. With the drama drawing to a close and his folly revealed, Othello asks in reference to Iago, "Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil / Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body" (Oth.V.ii.301-2), and in an even more memorable moment mutters, "I look down towards

¹¹ This and the following references are according to the "Names of the Actors," as printed in the 1623 Folio edition of Shakespeare's works.
his feet...but that's a fable. / If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee" (V.ii.286-7). The Moor's declining glance is seeking cloven hooves, a traditional Medieval manifestation of the Devil, but Shakespeare is far from the physical monstrosity of such a character as Grendel, or even his own Caliban, in his depiction of the Satanic embodiment in Othello. Iago bears no outward signs of his vicious nature; in fact, if one were to base their judgment solely upon the traditional standard of topical monstrosity, it should be the black-skinned, alien Moor, not the white citizen of Venice, who is the play's Devil-figure. Yet when Othello moves to prove his reasoning is sound by stabbing his Ensign, Iago chillingly replies, "I bleed, sir, but not killed" (V.ii.289), a line which both mocks the General and validates the reading of Iago as a powerful Satanic embodiment.

Considered from this perspective, the Medieval roots of Iago's character are present but vague, overshadowed by his diabolic iconoclassism. His initial speech relating his slighting by Othello through Cassio's promotion to Lieutenant in his stead certainly figures Lucifer's envy of God and also Cain's envy of Abel in the Scriptures and Cycle Dramas, and his infamous "I am not what I am" (I.i.65) presents itself as antithetical to the "I am that I am' [which is] God's name in answer to the query of Moses" (Bloom Oth. 3), but Iago's envy of Cassio proves an ultimately superficial, or at least only partial, motivation for his deeds, and his self-negation, more than creating him as a traditional Medieval pole to the Deity, prepares us in a most sinister fashion for the later lines:

Divinity of hell!
When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now, (Oth.II.iii.333-6)

which follow the Shakespearean motif defining Evil as a departure from the standard representation of the Satanic embodiment into a realm where 'seeming' beguiles 'being' and visual cues provide no certainties as to the machinations of the heart and mind. In Iago this motion which removed Macbeth from Caliban reaches its apex, for here the Medieval
tradition, beyond the instances related above, is so far submerged as to be barely extant. Iago bears none of the topical monstrosity of Caliban, nor is his the overwhelmingly Luciferian Pride of Macbeth. He is instead what Hugh Grady terms "a de-centered self re-inscribed into a logic of reified rationality - a replacement for the old, centered traditions, but one that proves even more destructive than the repressive systems it has usurped" (Grady 538). Following this logic, it becomes easier to see the way in which Othello deconstructs the Satanic embodiment, for Iago is a monster of pure will who plunders the Divine logos, perverting reason, logic, rhetoric, and language itself towards destructive rather than creative ends.

The equation between Iago and the Satanic will is plain in the play. Speaking to his gull, Roderigo, the Ensign says:

Virtue? a fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many... why, the power and corrigeible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous ends. But we have reason. (Oth.I.iii.319-23; 325-9)

Here Iago begins by disparaging virtue and thus disintegrating "the classic Greco-Christian pursuit of the good and...the related notion of a fixed human nature or virtue in harmony with larger cosmic structure" (Grady 540). Into this vacuum of values Iago elevates the will, but because of his destruction of traditional standards and systems, Iago's will, his rationality, is "no longer Augustine's virtuous reason; rather, it has become autonomous from all values other than...radical self-interest" (Grady 543). In this manner released
"from the restraints of custom, tradition, or ethics," Iago's malign will "becomes a self-perpetuating and autotelic...undifferentiated will-to-power" (Grady 544) which allows him to practice what many critics, from Coleridge through the most modern interpreters, have determined is "evil for its own sake" (Mooney 121).

It is in this that Iago most falls away from Shakespeare's every other Satanic embodiment, for in seeming Good yet being Evil, as opposed to seeming Good and being overwhelmed by either intellectual or appetitic Vices, as are Macbeth and Caliban, the Moor's ensign becomes very nearly an incarnation, not merely an embodiment, of the Devil. What Iago enacts in Othello is an "incessant war against being" (Bloom Oth. 5), an action undertaken so completely by no character since the Devil himself: Iago does not seek promotion or even vengeance so much as he simply seeks the destruction of those around him, especially, though not exclusively, those who embody aspects of traditional Good: the chaste Desdemona, the philosophic gentleman Michael Cassio, and the noble, valiant warrior Othello. All three represent ideals which have no grounding, no place in the cosmos of discord that is Iago's mind, and so the Ensign, concealing his not motiveless, but hyper-motivated malignity behind a show of fair face, plots to draw them all into the maw of his devouring will.

Iago testifies to this masked nature of his ill intentions when he responds to Roderigo's comment about following Othello with:

O, sir, content you.

I follow [the Moor] to serve my turn upon him.

In following him, I follow but myself;

Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,

But seeming so, for my peculiar end. (Oth.I.i.42-3; 58-60)

Continuing this dialogue with Roderigo, who seeks Desdemona for his own pleasures, the Ensign elaborates on the nature of his "peculiar end," saying, "if sanctimony and a frail
vow betwixt an erring / barbarian and a supersubtle Venetian be not too hard for / my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her" (Oth.I.iii.352-4), thus framing his endeavor against the Moor as a type of challenge or puzzle to the dark prowess of his mind, an image of intellectual game-playing which is reinforced with: "If / thou canst cuckold [Othello,] thou dost thyself a pleasure, me / a sport" (I.iii.363-5), and then expanded to encompass not only the motion against Othello, but all of Iago's relationships when he quips of the recently departed Roderigo,

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
If I would time expend with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit. (Oth.I.iii.377-80)

Iago's equation between his actions and sport or game may seem flippant to the point of callousness, but it is actually an essential facet of his character. The lines: "Cassio's a proper man. Let me see now; / To get his place, and to plume up my will / In double knavery" (I.iii.386-8) confirm the validity of Iago's "sporting" attitude by recalling the source of all his actions in his Satanic volition. As the lines assert, Iago's Evil will can only be gratified through evil actions, and the fact that Iago is aware that his purpose, his very existence, is merely to exert his will-to-power by utterly dominating those with which he comes in contact makes the metaphor of his inter-personal relationships as "games" apt indeed.

In playing these games, the Ensign essays to win through the use and abuse of language. Kenneth Palmer observes that, "whenever Iago is involved with any other character for a short time he adapts his style of speech with some precision to that character" (Palmer 185). For example, early in the play Iago marks how Othello speaks in "bombast circumstances / Horribly stuffed with epithets of war" (Oth.I.i.13-4) and after the General presents his exceedingly bombastic and epithetical speech bewailing the lost "Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war" (III.iii.354), Iago, who is in danger at
this moment of losing his life, much less his voice in Othello's ear, responds with his own rant:

O grace! O heaven forgive me...
O wretched fool,
That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice!
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,
To be direct and honest is not safe. (Oth. III. iii. 373; 375-8)

As Anthony Hecht notes, "this is not the way Iago speaks to anyone else in the play" (133), and that is with reason, for there is no one else in the play who would relate to this particular cadence of speech and turn of phrase better than Othello; for the words, phrased "in terms of the concepts and values of Othello's own belief system" (Grady 547), are as his own. Iago's inventive bit of imitation serves to establish a subtle, eloquent link with the Moor, and the psychological familiarity of the "voice" has the effect of recalling Iago into Othello's favor, for the General's immediate response is, "Nay stay. Thou shouldst be honest" (III. iii. 381). This allows Iago to continue speaking, and thereby continue "poisoning Othello" (Palmer 185) with his perversions of language and rhetoric.

The destruction of the Moor is, of course, the ultimate satiation for the consuming will of his Ensign, and it is towards this end that Iago bends the full force of that will as he contrives to "pour this pestilence in [Othello's] ear, / That [Desdemona] repeals [Cassio] for her body's lust" (Oth. II. iii. 339-40). Before one may determine how and why Iago's plot achieves fruition, however, it is necessary to examine the object of that plot himself, for in the character of the Moor of Venice we find that, just as Shakespeare was refiguring the tradition of the Satanic embodiment through Iago, so too was he revising the image of its counterbalance, the Deific embodiment, and thereby creating through his drama a complete paradigm shift in the binary of Good and Evil.

Given the Medieval tradition from which the idea germinates, reading Othello as a "knightly defender of Christian civilization" (Rose 67) is at first a somewhat difficult idea
to assimilate, for the General shares but few traits with his precursory Deific embodiments. While he has the requisite martial skills and strength to find a lineage in the Medieval heroes, he is physically marginalized, or made Other, by his race. Othello is Moorish, "a fact conventionally [linked] to negroid features and undisguisedly identified with black skin" (Hecht 125), and hence, following the traditional affiliation of the color black with the Devil and his ilk, Othello should be much closer to a Grendel or a Cain than to a socially centered figure such as Beowulf or Roland.  

12 It is because of this alien status, that the Moorish General, figured as "an extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" (Oth.I. i.135-6), appears "not quite at ease" (Hecht 123) in Venice, just as Venice is similarly not quite at ease with Othello, a point the play makes plain in its first scenes. The natives of the canal-city lean hard towards the traditional view of Othello as owning a diabolical spirit beneath his "begrimed and black" (Oth.III.iii.387) visage, and Brabantino's accusation:

O thou foul thief, where hast thou stowed my daughter?
Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her!
For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
If she in chains of magic were not bound,
Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy...
Would ever have, t'incur a general mock,
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as thou  (Oth.I.ii.62-6; 69-71)

12 I allow that neither Beowulf nor Roland, nor any Medieval Deific embodiment, "fits" perfectly into its society, but they are still understood to be members of the social center, both physically and via their positions - Beowulf is eventually king, and Roland chief of Charlemagne's Peers - a status which Shakespeare's mercenary Moor is never able to achieve.
sheds light on this view of Othello as a dangerous "other;" a diabolic sorcerer who has enchanted Desdemona "with foul charms" (I.ii.73). Nor may this be dismissed solely as the biased rantings of a deceived, angry father, for in spite of Othello's military import to the Venetian state, the charges of the Moor's "witchcraft" (I.iii. 64) and his "practices of cunning hell" (I.iii. 102), when laid before the Senate, are not dismissed out of hand, and clearly serve to enforce the idea that the citizens of Venice to some degree found the Moor "to represent a principle of wild disorder lodged in the very heart of metropolitan civilization" (Neill 363). But beyond Othello's physical status, which is definitively marginal, perhaps even diabolic, if one allows that the Medieval delineation of the pagan Saracens as embodiments of the Devil may extend to all non-Christian sects, it is the Moor's striking distance from the Deific logos which would seem to most impugn him as a servant of Evil, not a soldier of Christ.

By his own admission, Othello has little skill with the primary embodiment of the logos, language. Addressing the Senators, he says:

Rude am I in my speech,
And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace;
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
Their dearest action in the tented field;
And little of this great world can I speak
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle. (Oth.I.iii.81-7)

Anthony Hecht finds that in this and many of his other speeches, Othello's social "uneasiness is expressed...in a baroque and unnecessary distortion of syntax and diction" (123), and while this doubtless a valid reading, I believe there is more inherent in the strangeness of Othello's speech than mere social alienation, for the Moor's confessed ineptitude with language severs him not only from man, but from the traditional image of the logos-bearing God. Critics will hold that Othello is certainly articulate, at times even
eloquent, but a careful scanning of his speeches reveals that the words of the Moor overwhelmingly focus not on intellect and rationality, the attendants of the logos, but on physical action. His famous address,

    Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
    Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars
    That make ambition virtue! O, farewell...
    The royal banner, and all quality,
    Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war...
    Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone! (Oth.III.iii.348-50; 353-4; 357)

provides a strong association of Othello's mind, indeed his very self, with his martial employment. That this war-like mentality is one "radically incompatible with self-reflection" (Rose 62) beyond the active sphere of combat and conquest is given further support in Othello's description of the course of his existence to Desdemona and her father, where the Moor speaks

    of most disastrous chances,
    Of moving accidents by flood and field;
    Of hairbreadth scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach;
    Of being taken by the insolent foe
    And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence... (Oth.I.iii.134-8)

The speech goes on, though this excerpt is sufficient to gather the way in which Othello's words are entirely involved in his physical actions, in this particular instance his past actions, and the deadening, monosyllabic, repetitive "of" demonstrates with subtle Shakespearean emphasis that Othello can use language to relate, but not to create, or to empower. Even his line "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (Oth.I.ii. 59), surely his most potent words prior to his final speech, are inscribed in the realm of action and martialism, and ultimately constitute a threat or warning never made good upon. The Moor's language is thus divorced from the realm of the logos, and this, coupled
with his physical marginality should be sufficient to ally Othello with the traditional embodiments of the Devil, whose form was monstrous and whose words were few and impotent in the face of the servants of the Almighty. Yet this dark, savage, ineloquent General is not the diabolic, but the Deific embodiment in Othello, a role clearly marked by the undeniable fact that, though by racial decent a Moor, Othello, by the time we encounter him, has converted to the service of Christianity.

As Iago's speeches are punctuated with references to devils and Hell, so are Othello's marked by references to Heaven. To the Senators he says, "as truly as to heaven / I do confess the vices of my blood:" "Vouch with me heaven," and "heaven defend your good souls" (Oth.I.iii.124-5; 261; 266); and to Desdemona's prayer for their harmonious love replies "Amen to that, sweet powers!" (II.i.193), but his most powerful statement of his Christian inclinations comes when he settles the dispute in the Cyprian tavern:

Why, how now, ho? From whence ariseth this?
Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?

For Christian shame put by this barbarous brawl! (Oth.II.iii.159-62)

Here Othello distinctly aligns himself with the Christian cosmos of values and, though his every appearance should seem to deny it, duly consecrates himself as the play's Deific embodiment and trumpets the dissolution of the traditional forms of Good and Evil by Shakespeare.

Dissolving is not destroying, however, nor even completely divorcing oneself from the moorings of traditional representation, and Shakespeare does retain one important aspect of the archetypal Medieval binary of Good and Evil in Othello. As Hugh Grady notes, the play figures "Iago as the agent of an acute, excessive rationalism, [and] Othello as the heroic but gullible subject of the intuitive and non-rational" (Grady 539). By giving Iago the tools of the logos with which to craft his destructive evil, and then embodying Good in a form much more easily associated with the traditional images of Evil,
Shakespeare has managed to deftly maintain the nature of opposition between the two spheres even as he inverts the binary of Good and Evil, making Darkness Light in Iago, and Light Darkness in Othello. When the clash of these opposites ends in tragedy, however, we distinctly see that the inversion, while superficially equitable, is in fact heavily weighted in favor of Evil and demonstrates diabolic will and intellect triumphing over a noble but simple, savage Goodness. In a universe inverted, it is Iago's voice that has the authority of the corrupted logos, and it is precisely through the clever implementation of this authority that the Ensign will succeed in serving his turn upon his master.

Othello, for all his wanderings on the worldly plains of battle, is by his own admission a novice upon the field of love, and his admitted "inexperience and inadequacy" (Hecht 136) in this venue provides the ever opportunistic Iago with a chink from which to pry apart the General's armor and torture his exposed mind upon a rack of hideous imaginings. The Ensign assumes an authoritative stance upon this amorous issue through his subtle exploitation of both the Moor's "painful naiveté" (137) and his marginal social status, and begins to abuse Othello's ear:

Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio;
Wear your eyes thus, not jealous nor secure;
I would not have your free and noble nature,
Out of self-bounty, be abused. Look to 't.
I know our country disposition well:
In Venice they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave 't undone, but keep 't unknown. (Oth.III.i.197-204)

Working off the dubious yet effective assertion that because he is a native Venetian he can divine the peculiarities of Venetian women such as Desdemona better than an outsider, especially one so green to the affairs of the heart as Othello, Iago employs conceits of language to dupe the Moor, who, though unshakably confident in matters martial, is given
to shuddering uncertainties in those marital. Unable to trust his own judgment, Othello is swift to substitute Iago's apparent authority as hewn from stone. As the Ensign's guileful speeches batter his faith in his wife, the Moor groans, "Why did I marry? This honest creature doubtless / Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds" (Oth. III.iii.242-3), and later amplifies the extent to which he has been convinced "to substitute these [Iagian] categories of perception for his own idealizations" (Grady 547) when he says of Iago, "This fellow's of exceeding honesty, / And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit / Of human dealings" (III.iii.258-60).

With Othello's ear thus bent to his inclining, Iago begins a "diabolical possession" (Rose 71) of his General. His sly, hinting accusation of Desdemona's dishonest nature, "She did deceive her father, marrying you; / And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks, / She loved them most" (Oth. III.iii.205-7) intimates that Othello's wife could, like any Venetian woman (given Iago's definition of the type), indeed be capable of marital subterfuge. The Ensign then embellishes his point with a description of Cassio's "dream" in which the noble lieutenant reportedly sighs, "Sweet Desdemona, / Let us be wary, let us hide our loves" (III.iii.419-20), a revelation which moves the impassioned Moor to cry "I'll tear her all to pieces!" (III.iii.431). Having thus incensed the General, Iago produces his "ocular proof" (III.iii.360) in an allusion to Othello's handkerchief.

_Iago: ...but such a handkerchief_

I am sure it was your wife's - did I to-day

See Cassio wipe his beard with.

_Othello: If it be that -_

_Iago: If it be that, or any that was hers,_

It speaks against her with the other proofs. (Oth. III.iii.437-41)

In these lines, Iago's verbal spears, tossed with impunity because of his pre-established position of "authority" in matters marital and Venetian, work to perfection against a man for whom, in spite of his blustery claims to the contrary, "mere suspicion will do for
certainty" (Rose 62). Iago does not need to produce "ocular proof," he merely needs to mention the possibility of its existence and Othello is set into such a frenzy that ideas which moments earlier were suspicions or allegations at best (Desdemona's deception of her father, Cassio's dream) now pass convincingly as "other proofs" thanks to the Ensign's diabolic tongue.

At this juncture in the play, Iago has already succeeded at the most difficult stage of his game, for his linguistic manipulations have fully aroused Othello's suspicions against Desdemona. The Moor says: "Now do I see 'tis true. Look here, Iago: / All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven. / 'Tis gone" (Oth. III. iii. 444-6) and then, in a scene which is very nearly nuptial, the two men kneel and exchange oaths:

_Othello:_ Now, by yond marble heaven,

In the due reverence of a sacred vow

I here engage my words.

_Iago:_ Do not rise yet...

Witness that here Iago doth give up

The execution of his wit, hands, heart

To wronged Othello's service...

_Othello:_ I greet thy love,

Not with vain thanks but with acceptance bounteous.

_(Oth. III. iii. 460-2; 465-7; 469-70)_

These lines provide a powerful twisting of the tenets of the wedding vows. The words which should bind a couple in love here bind the two men in a murderous allegiance of vengeance, and the final line of the conversation, Iago's "I am your own for ever" (III. iii. 480), is the most subtle and sinister of the entire exchange, for the moment the words are uttered they undergo an immediate self-deconstruction wherein, based upon our knowledge of his diabolic intentions, "we understand that [Iago] means the opposite of what he speaks: Othello is now his" (Rose 72).
With the Satanic marriage of the Moor and the Ensign at the close of Act III, the possession of Othello's soul is complete. What remains for Iago is merely a trick of puppet-mastery; the manipulation of the proper players and props into the proper positions at the precise times - for example, allowing Othello to believe he spies his wife and Cassio conversing by chance when in fact Iago himself has arranged for the meeting between the two, and further arranged to have the Moor pass in the vicinity. At this facet of the game, Iago is "diabolically effective because his victims, like those of his villainous predecessor Richard III, are 'cast in darkness;[they] simply do not know what is going on" (Mooney 111). The Ensign achieves this feat of obfuscation, particularly with Othello, by remaining (mostly) above suspicion through another bit of linguistic trickery whereby he coaxes the Moor to his own conclusions, then reinforces them by regurgitating Othello's own words. This is particularly evident in the first scene of Act IV, where the subject of Desdemona's alleged affair with Cassio is most directly broached:

Othello: What hath [Cassio] said?

Iago: Faith, that he did - I know not what he did.

Othello: What? what?

Iago: Lie -

Othello: With her?

Iago: With her, on her; what you will.

Othello: Lie with her? Lie on her? - We say lie on her when they belie her. - Lie with her! Zounds, that's fulsome.

(Oth.IV.i.31-6)

The Ensign's verbal leading of the General here is masterful. His seeming vacillations between loyal speech and prudent silence prompt Othello's overhasty interjection, "With her?" to the cue "Lie -" which removes the burden of accusation, and likewise the culpability, from Iago's speech. He follows smartly by echoing Othello and equivocating "what you will," knowing that he need say no more, for the venom of the "green-eyed
"monster" (Oth.III.iii.167) is already quickening in the Moor's blood, leaving him stripped
of his "self-authored subjectivity" (Grady 547) and refashioned through Iago's perversion
of the logos into "the condition of anonymous [cuckholded] Moor" (Neill 373).

The surpassing subtlety with which Iago choreographs this and the other episodes
in his destruction of Othello and Desdemona allows for his own villainy to slither away
into the shadowy backgrounds. In the conclusion of the exchange above, Othello becomes
so engrossed in his attempt to reason his way through his own words that he misses
entirely Iago's role as catalyst of those words before finally falling into an epileptic seizure
which figures his psychological disintegration at the hands of "honest Iago" (Oth.II.iii.
167). In fact, so well does the Ensign work his devilry that the majority of Act IV is
dominated by the rage of an Othello convinced that Desdemona is corrupt, infidelitous,
and evil - the Devil herself, and this trend persists through much of Act V, where it is
mingled with the antithetical voice of Emilia who vociferously condemns the "dull Moor"
(V.ii.226) as a "blacker devil" (V.ii.132), thus creating a stupendously muddled confusion
as to where the guilt and blame and label "Evil" should rightly be placed. In a fitting
testament to his manipulative prowess, Iago's name is never mentioned in this storm of
finger-pointing chaos until the very end, and by that time, of course, the tragic damage has
been inflicted beyond repair.

Spurred by the deceitful insinuations of his Ensign and the jealous heat of his own
infirm mind, Othello, following Iago's suggestion, strangles his innocent wife in her bed.
The vile murder is swiftly sounded out, and when, in the wake of the untangling of the
skein of lies and misrepresentations, the Ozian curtain is flung back to reveal Iago, we find
the Ensign not fearful or remorseful, but evincing a disturbing pride in his ability to script
havoc. Questioned by his wife Emilia, "Did you ever tell [Othello] she was false"
(Oth.V.ii.179), Iago boldly and gladly replies, "I did" (V.ii.180). That Iago takes a great
"delight in his...fascinating devilry" (Mooney 119) is apparent throughout the play. In Act
II, having just engineered the disgrace and dismissal of Cassio, Iago exclaims, "By the
mass, 'tis morning! / Pleasure and action make the hours seem short" (II.iii.360-1), and even more memorably, in Act III, after first tainting Othello's mind with a taste of suspicion against Desdemona, he gloats,

Look where he comes! Not poppy nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever med'cine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou owedst yesterday.  (Oth. III.iii.330-4)

clearly delighting in the fact that he has inflicted excruciating psychological damage upon the Moor. This vicious glee and pride in his devious deeds is quite possibly the most distressing aspect of the Ensign's role as a Satanic embodiment, for it both stems from and confirms the fact that Iago's will is of itself Evil, and moves only to commit Evil, for such atrocities are the sole way its appetites can be appeased. Iago's diabolic pleasure in the success of his villainous gaming is boundless, and not even the uncertainty of his own fate, which the play intimates is death by torture, can halt its progress. Captured and exposed as the mastermind of the plot, Iago's retort to Othello's demand for an explanation of his Ensign's treachery is "Demand me nothing. What you know, you know. / From this time forth I never will speak word" (V.ii.303-4). Iago is Iago, the silence tells us, and from what we know of his incessant will-to-power, that is reason enough. In fact, his adamant refusal to disclose his motives provides the final demonstration of the dominance of that Evil volition by spiting the Moor of even the slightest satisfaction and forcing him to go to his death without ever truly knowing the nature of the disaster which befell him, and is thus a fitting punctuation for Iago's campaign of linguistic manipulations. The destruction wrought by the force of his twisted logos is now complete, and as no further mayhem could be created through his speech, Iago rests his voice, allowing himself to be a spectator to the final moments of the drama he had heretofore directed.

Like Macbeth before him, the Othello of this last portion of Act V stands apart from the Othello of the rest of the play. For perhaps the first time he is self-aware, and
though he takes little solace in that knowledge, he is at least unfettered from the blinding chains of jealous suspicion and murderous wrath. He is the calm, collected General once more; the General as we have seen in only the briefest of flashes prior to this point, but he is more than this as well. Standing at what he knows is his "journey's end" (*Oth.V.i.i.268*), he recalls his role as Deific embodiment in a striking series of Christian images. He is repentant, both of his wife's murder and of the trespass against Cassio, and his association with Iscariot, the "base Judean" (*V.i.347*), confirms that he anticipates a deserved punishment and "is therefore committing himself not only to the death by suicide that was the lot of Judas, but to hell and damnation" (Hecht 141). Regardless of what may await him in the hereafter, however, Othello will meet it with a last gesture of greatness. Having sued for forgiveness and acknowledged that he is nonetheless likely damned, the Moor summons a final image of his service to the state:

Set you down this.
And say besides that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog
And smote him - thus. (*Oth.V.i.352-6*)

And so, with all the glory of his Crusading Christianity thus recovered to trail in his wake, Othello falls on his sword. Critics have long delighted in demonstrating how this suicide "triumphantly...cancels out" (Neill 373) the tragic errors to which Iago manipulated the General, and finds Othello "reasserting his allegiance to his heroic self" (Rose 77) at the close of the play. While it is undeniable that both the speech and the gesture invoke a certain tragic grandeur which vests the fallen Othello in noble trappings, there is much in this reductive reading that remains problematic, particularly from the perspective of the binary between Good and Evil in the play.
It is not so much that Othello dies, or even the nature of his death, for suicide, while a grave sin against Christianity, is not an uncommon end for Deific embodiments. Rather, it is the fact that the death of Othello does not restore harmony to even the Moor's small universe, and certainly does not permit a traditional reading of the Deific embodiment as victorious over its Satanic counterpart. In fact, it does quite the opposite. So complete is Iago's triumph in *Othello* that it robs the Moor even of victory in death, for Othello's self-slaughter cannot efface the fact that Desdemona is dead. Though Othello may be "an honorable murderer...he is a murderer nonetheless" (Rose 77), and therefore any reading the General's suicide in strictly triumphant or heroic terms "misrepresents the tenor of Shakespeare's play" (Rose 77) by wrongly denying the overwhelming victory which Iago has achieved over his enemies.

Additionally, there is the problem of the unresolved paradigm shift, for even in death, Othello maintains his dislocation from the *logos* which marks the standard representation of the Deific embodiment. At *Othello's* conclusion there is no wise magus bestowing mercy upon his defeated foes, nor is there a temperate, rational Malcolm restoring order to the Scottish throne, both actions which ratified the triumph of Good over Evil in their respective dramas. Rather, there is only the Moor's "bloody period" (*Oth. V.ii.357*), a motion which, instead of elevating Othello as a Deific embodiment, proves a final account of his inability to form the *logos* of reason and intellect, for it creates only another image of his prior military action which, in its rich resonance with his tale-telling of Act I, demonstrates that Othello has remained lodged to the last in the stasis of his martial physicality, and thereby proved ultimately ineffectual as an opponent to darkly ethereal intellect of Iago.

13 Again I fall back on Beowulf and Roland, both of whom enact effectively suicidal gestures: Beowulf in his single-combat with the dragon, Roland in his attempt to defeat the entire horde of Saracens at Ronceval Pass without sounding his horn for reinforcements; and both of whom are assumed into a heavenly afterlife when they fall.
Thus *Othello* ends as it began, in a confusion that is testament to the grave power of Shakespeare's eloquent Satanic embodiment. The play does not return, as do *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, to the ordered terms of the established hierarchy of the traditional dualism of Good and Evil, and while Othello can reclaim something of his dissociated identity and even render himself tragically noble in his suicide, he ultimately cannot right this shifted paradigm. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the chaste Desdemona, her faithful Emilia, and the valiant General all are dead, yet Iago, the sole orchestrator of this fatal mayhem, remains. He no longer speaks, holding quiet even against the threat of torture, but his persistent existence is a continued reminder that Shakespeare's binary deconstruction leaves us in a cosmos where a naturalistic, almost savage Deific embodiment proves incapable of finding victory over an enlightened, hyper-rational Evil. Unable to re-establish even a semblance of the traditional vision in the conclusion of *Othello*, we remain "trapped in the space of Iago's challenge to meaning and value" (Grady 539); an inverted universe where Othello's death does not negate his Ensign's villainy; where chaos lords over order; and where Iago's voluntary muteness, his final act of Satanic will, becomes a mocking laughter which echoes silently over the players and the play long after the curtain has fallen on the Moor's last sigh.
"In Nomine Diaboli:"
Captain Ahab and the
American Satanic Embodiment

Spirit...of the barrier overgone
By the comets who were cast
From their pride, and from their throne...
To be carriers of fire
(The red fire of their heart)
With speed that may not tire
And with pain that shall not part.

- Edgar Allan Poe

An ocean away from the English soil which had founded it, the idea of
Romanticism took shape and hold in the New World during the American Renaissance of
the nineteenth century. With this transfer of philosophies came, of course, the concept of
the Satanic embodiment and its attendant conundrum of the essence of Evil. Though the
Medieval origins of the diabolic image were by this time generally viewed through the
reifying lenses of the Miltonic and Shakespearean achievements, the American school of
Transcendentalism would not be bound by these newer, revised standards of
representation. Rather, the American Romantics adopted the fading elements of the
Medieval standards and adapted them to the precursory reconstructions of the seventeenth
century, creating a sea of "profound dualisms and moral paradoxes" (Reynolds 56) from
which would arise the most surpassing vision of the American Satanic embodiment,
Herman Melville's Moby Dick.

Before extended comment can be made about Melville's work, however, it is
necessary to ground it somewhat in the particulars of the Transcendental understanding of
Evil. Sacvan Bercovitch aptly notes that it is "Emerson's fusion of Romantic naturalism and Puritan hermeneutics" (Bercovitch 163) in the form of the American Self which best defines the philosophic heart of pre-Civil War America, and it is in terms of this Emersonian Self that Transcendental Evil comes to be most depicted as an individual's 'trial of the center' in which the ego overcomes the soul" (163). This concept, once again equating the extremely intellectual mind with the throne of Evil, was enabled by the nineteenth century movement toward the "erosion of boundaries between the sacred and the secular" (Reynolds 57). This disintegration permitted American authors, here following directly in the footsteps of Milton and Shakespeare, to subsume the Scriptural logos of enlightened rationality from its long-standing function as "intermediary between the Puritan and God" (Bercovitch 165) and present it instead as an antithetical emblem to the traditional constructions of Good and Evil. By drawing the Romantic Self into a diabolic darkness and having it emerge no longer as a "divinity incarnate" (164), but a thing more twisted and Evil than was ever conceived by all the brood of Byron and Shelley, the Transcendentalists placed a quintessentially American stamp upon the relationship between the intellect and the Devil.

This intellectual aspect of the Transcendental Satanic embodiment becomes virtually a representational constant in nineteenth-century American literature. While its roots are chiefly Shakespearean, the form associated with this diabolic wit is drawn in many aspects from more Medieval waters. Though previous reconstructions of the Devil's traditional image had concerned themselves with reducing the physical marginality of such characters in an effort to elevate the emphasis upon the depravities of the diabolic mind, American authors seemed wholly content to allow a degree of topical monstrosity to

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1 Iago, the villain of Shakespeare's Othello, provides the premier example of this representation of a rational, intellectual Evil which is not betrayed by even a subtle degree of topical monstrosity.
reflect the devious machinations of their Satanic embodiments, and nowhere does one find a more extreme example of this tendency than in Edgar Allen Poe's poem, "The Raven."

Poe's tale of an avian avatar and the sentence of doom it passes upon a forlorn lover has long stood in the glare of the lanterns of criticism. While the author's own comments about the piece in "The Philosophy of Composition" have caused "other ways of looking at the poem [to be] generally neglected" (Granger 53), but the powerful rendition of the haunting bird and its torturing of its host nevertheless permits "The Raven" to shine even more brightly as a spectre of the Satanic than an exemplar of "carefully crafted...creation" (53). From the perspective of the diabolic, Poe's Raven blends an aspect gleaned from the traditional Medieval archetype with an essence that is wholly an example of intellectualized Evil. Beyond its black plumage, whose color is typically affiliated with evil, the bird itself has specific links to the diabolic. While the oldest mythological traditions affiliated the raven with "intelligence and power" (Adams 53), 2 those that were prominent during development of the Satanic embodiment in the Middle Ages held the bird in a darker repute. Folklore listed the raven among the animal forms whose shapes the Devil could control or assume (Russell 67), while the Church Fathers turned to the book of Genesis to condemn the raven as an example of "bestial appetite" (Adams 53) for failing to return to Noah's ark after discovering land, and also managed to find an association between the bird and the first Satanic embodiment, Cain (Russell 67 n.10). It was secular masterpoet Geoffrey Chaucer's Manciple's Tale, however, which popularized an old Ovidian bit describing the blackening of the raven's original whiteness as punishment for its intemperate tongue 3 and confirmed an equation

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2 In Greco-Roman mythology, the raven was generally affiliated with Athena (wisdom) and Apollo (knowledge), while in the Norse tradition, Odin kept a pair of the birds perched atop his throne as representations of the divine mind and will (Adams 53).

3 The raven informs Apollo of his lover's infidelity, and after the wrathful god executes the adulteress, he strikes the raven's ivory coat to ebony as punishment for the bird's "tale-
between the bird and the abuse of speech that would provide the strongest influence on Poe's development of his demonic "bird of yore" (Poe 69).

When the Raven first flits through the lover's window it appears to be a bird of good omen. The narrator describes its "mien of lord or lady" (Poe 39) as it alights atop the "bust of Pallas" (40), sketching a quick portrait of the winged visitor as both noble and wise, but even in these early stanzas we are never far from the more sinister undertones that the poet associates with the Raven. In the verses directly following its entrance, the "ebony bird" (42) is described as "wandering from the Nightly shore" (45), a realm Poe associates not only with death, but specifically with the Roman Underworld when he appends the adjective "Plutonian" (46) to the description, thus subtly intimating that this midnight mendicant has been loosed from Hell for some dark purpose.

As the poem unfolds, we learn that this purpose is the devastation of the lover's hopes for reunion with his "lost Lenore" (Poe 10), an end which the Raven will gain through its iterance of "Nevermore" (47). This linguistic device is a clever manipulation on Poe's part of an obscure Seutonian association of the raven with hope through the transliteration of the "sound the raven makes, ['caw']...into the Greek word 'cras,' meaning 'tomorrow'" (Adams 53), a term which is forever invested with all the optimism of a new dawn. Thus the Raven's speech, which firmly supports the reading of an intellectualized Evil in a topically monstrous, or in this case bestial form, is also the central irony of the poem, for the bird "speaks not with the Greek word 'cras,' 'tomorrow,' but the exact reverse" (53), and "Nevermore," from its first utterance to its last, will drown the few vestiges of the lover's hope in a whirlpool of despair from whose depths, given the Christian teaching that the complete loss of Hope is the "only unpardonable sin" (Granger 53), we may read the narrator's soul as "ready to be claimed by the Devil" (53).

telling," which had alerted him to the behavior and thus proved the source of his subsequent misery.
As "The Raven" builds towards this tragic climax, the language of the bird maintains its steady monotony, a deadening repetition which reflects the inevitability of the hopeless narrator's damnation, while at the same time the language of the poem itself becomes more frenetic in its overt revelations of the bird as a Satanic embodiment. Like the seemingly innocuous initial voicings of "Nevermore," the poetic demonization of the Raven begins subtly. After the lover has psychologically transferred "the dirges of his Hope" (Poe 64) onto the fanciful master of the bird, he sinks upon a seat to contemplate the meaning of "Nevermore," and as his own sense of hopelessness for the recovery of Lenore begins to build, so too does the diabolic quality of the Raven. No longer noble or wise, the bird is now described as "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous" (70), and is characterized by its "fiery eyes" (73) which sear at the narrator's heart. Commenting on the Medieval origins of this aspect of the Raven's description, Byrd Granger notes that, "in folklore, the Devil's eyes become fiery when he is about to seize a soul" (Granger 53-4), and this seizure is precisely what transpires in the last stanzas of the poem.

Continuing to beguile the lover's pleas for a posthumous reunion with his lady by the diabolic inversion of its "proper" speech with the deflating "Nevermore," the Raven becomes fully revealed as the Devil it has all along so craftily embodied. Raving, the narrator describes the bird as "Tempter sent" (Poe 85), and twice addresses it with the rebuke "Prophet!...thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil!" (84) before finally acknowledging its utterly diabolic nature by shrilling, "Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" (96) as herald to his vain attempts in the penultimate stanza to remove the Raven from both its perch upon his statue and its hold upon his soul. This last effort, concluding with "Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!" (100), is rife with all the pathos of utter despair, but is coldly refuted as the implacable Raven calmly continues to recite its damning mantra of "Nevermore."

The narrator's hopes thus utterly baffled, the poem concludes with an image of the final triumph of the demon-bird:
And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

Shall be lifted - nevermore! (Poe 101-7)

Secure upon its ironic seat, Poe's avian Satanic embodiment lords over its victim, whose soul it has wrapped in the eternal shadow of damnation by bereaving Hope through a keen and cunning manipulation of language. The poem's final word recalls the method of the Raven's evil and reinforces the reading of the bird as an amalgam couching the Renaissance concept of the diabolic mind and its attendant perversions of the Divine logos within the marginal, bestial shape of a traditionally Medieval diabolic form. In this respect, "The Raven" offers a testament to the particularly American vision of the Satanic embodiment as inhuman both in intellect and appearance which is further developed in the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, another New Englander whose work was even more influential than Poe's on Melville's definitive shaping of the Transcendental Devil in Moby Dick.

Hawthorne's art brought the Satanic embodiment to a level paradoxically more and less human than is found in Poe's extreme representations. While his diabolic characters are afflicted with at least a degree of topical monstrosity, they are recognizably human and not demonic spirits embodied in bestial shapes such as ravens, cats, or orangutans.\(^\text{4}\)

The equation between Evil and the intellect fostered by Poe in "The Raven" is retained, however, and even expanded by Hawthorne to fit his own vision of Evil as "the separation of the intellect from the heart" (Gollin 85). This concept is explored to some extent in

\(^\text{4}\) See "The Black Cat" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" for these other examples of Poe's implementation of the animal-form as guise for the Satanic.
many of Hawthorne's works, though most notably in *The Scarlet Letter* and "Ethan Brand," which when viewed in tandem demonstrate the author's development of his particular Satanic embodiment as almost Shakespearean in its perversions of the intellect and ultimately self-effacing in its Evil.

Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* is a romance of systemic inversions wherein both the heroine and the villain disrupt the parameters of their representations, each undergoing a reification, though in vastly dissimilar directions. Hester Prynne, in her adamant refusal to be bounded by the Puritanical definition of the labeling letter "A," effectively devalues what was intended as a signifier of her shame and thereby strips the patriarchal, *logos*-inspired sentence of the Bostonian magistrates of its punitive effectiveness. But Hester's actions, while indeed subversive to traditional rhetoric, are representative of the more positive, Romantic facet of the Emersonian Self, and reflect nothing of the darkly purposeful intellectual malignity of that Transcendental coin's reverse-side, a negative face that in *The Scarlet Letter* is indelibly inscribed as the image of Roger Chillingworth.

Chillingworth, a hypocritical healer who diabolically deconstructs the established tenets of his profession by bringing harm in lieu of health, possesses all the requisites of the American Satanic embodiment. His initial description in the novel --

> There was a remarkable intelligence in his features, as of a person who had so cultivated his mental part that it could not fail to mould the physical to itself, and become manifest by unmistakable tokens. Although, by a seemingly careless arrangement of his heterogeneous garb, he had endeavoured to conceal or abate the peculiarity, it was sufficiently evident to Hester Prynne, that one of this man's shoulder's rose higher than the other. (Hawthorne 87)

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5 See Nina Baym's "Introduction" to the Penguin publication of *The Scarlet Letter* (1983), for an intriguing expansion of this idea.
— brings his intellect immediately to the fore, but Chillingworth's hunched back also evokes the Medieval tradition of monstrosity being an internal defect mirrored through an outward deficiency. Hawthorne elaborates on this trope when he describes the physician's face upon seeing Hester: "A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one little pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight" (Hawthorne 88). The serpent is a definitive reference to the Scriptural Devil, and the presence of the snake within Chillingworth, revealed only through a spasm of his outward visage and then "instantaneously controlled by an effort of his will" (88), furthers Hawthorne's rendition of an internalized Evil made more manifest by brief external flashes. This variation of the Medieval standard is later consummated in an image of the hell-fire which burns in the physician's heart: "Ever and anon, too, there came a glare of red light out of [Chillingworth's] eyes; as if the old man's soul were on fire, and kept on smouldering duskily within his breast, until, by some casual puff of passion, it was blown into a momentary flame" (187). This vaguely Miltonic motif of bearing a hell within oneself fixes Chillingworth as a character of diabolic nature, a reading that the text proceeds to substantiate through a series of allusions and associations that present the physician most overtly as a Satanic embodiment.

To begin, the text frequently makes titular equations between Chillingworth and the Devil or Hell, first describing him as capable of passing "for the arch-fiend" (Hawthorne 175), and thereafter relating his appearance suddenly in the midst of a crowd as if he had risen "up out of some nether region" (265). Likewise, the novel labels Chillingworth "a wanderer" (101), an appellation that resonates with the first Biblical monster, Cain, and also meshes with Medieval folkloric and theological treatments of the Devil as a perpetual wanderer who was "active everywhere and at all times" (Russell 72),

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6 The image of the internalized serpent was a great favorite of Hawthorne's: see especially "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent," for a parallel account.
to explain the ubiquity of Evil. Further, the narrator notes that, "Under the appellation of Roger Chillingworth...was hidden another name, which its former wearer had resolved should never more be spoken" (Hawthorne 140), and while this may be simply an obscure phrasing of the fact that Chillingworth's "hidden" name is Roger Prynne, there is sufficient circumstantial evidence amassed regarding the character's diabolic nature to support reading this line as another reference to Satan, whose also possessed a former name, Lucifer, before his fall from Heaven stripped him of all such Graceful associations.

While the sum of these allusions, coupled with the physical malformity of the hunched leech, clearly allow "the reader to view Chillingworth as a demon, a devil, the Black Man" (Carton 106), it is still the overwhelming intellectualization of Chillingworth's Evil that is the romance's most powerful evidence of his role as a vengeful Satanic embodiment. From the outset, Chillingworth places great store in his mental faculties. He is a physician, a scholar, a learned man of "dark and self-relying intelligence" (Hawthorne 100), but his knowledge is steeped in blackness, and where he might heal, he instead harms, deconstructing the established tenets of his office and employing his scientific powers of observation to enable his subtle revenge upon his adulterous wife's lover. As he himself avows to Hester, "I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him...He bears no letter of infamy wrought into his garment, as thou dost, but I shall read it on his heart" (100-01). With his mind thus set upon his course, Chillingworth soon brings all his formidable discernment to bear upon the sin-burdened minister of Boston, "relentlessly probing the recesses of Dimmesdale's consciousness with the single and exclusive purpose of ascertaining guilt or innocence" (Bryson 90).

As he battens upon the overwrought conscience of Dimmesdale, Chillingworth is employing his intellect to commit the "cardinal Hawthornian sin of violating the sanctity of a human heart" (Bryson 86). Suspicious of the minister almost from the first, it is only when Chillingworth's clinical eye at last allows him to perceive the unerring stab of his
instinct that we begin to fully comprehend the depths of his diabolic nature. Moments after he has discovered the "A" branded on Dimmesdale's chest, the physician is described as possessing,

a wild look of wonder, joy, and horror...a ghastly rapture, as it were, too mighty to be expressed only by the eye and features, and therefore bursting forth through the whole ugliness of his figure and making itself even riotously manifest by the extravagant gestures with which he threw up his arms towards the ceiling and stamped his foot upon the floor. Had a man seen old Roger Chillingworth, at that moment of his ecstasy, he would have had no need to ask how Satan comports himself; when a precious human soul is lost to heaven, and won into his kingdom. (Hawthorne 159)

Having his positively identified his victim, Chillingworth embarks upon his insidious revenge, an enterprise which he will engender in a form most suited to his perversion of the physician's office by keeping the suffering minister alive. While "there is...no reason to doubt the claim that without Chillingworth's ministrations Dimmesdale would have long since died" (Bryson 86), the healing of the minister, far from finding its source in any underlying "impulse of charity" (86), is the crux of the leech's vengeance. As Evan Carton notes, "rather than condemning Dimmesdale to death, Chillingworth condemns him to live beneath an ever-burning gaze fixed on his breast" (Carton 106).

This torture, sustained for seven years, is Chillingworth's masterpiece of darkness, and it is made even more diabolic by the sadistic lagnian pleasure the old hunchback derives from his success. Gloating to Hester, he raves,

Better he had died at once! Never did a mortal suffer what this man has suffered. And all, all in the sight of his worst enemy!...He fancied himself given over to a fiend...Yea, indeed! - he did not err! - there was a fiend at his elbow! A mortal man, with once a human heart, has become a fiend for his especial torment! (Hawthorne 189)
Confirming himself as a Satanic embodiment, Chillingworth scorns Hester's plea, "Hast thou not tortured him enough" (Hawthorne 190) with the daunting "No! no! - He has but increased the debt!" (190). What the bounds of the physician's scourging of Dimmesdale's psyche and heart might have been one shudders to think, for given what Chillingworth's deep and potent mind for malevolence had already wrought, the worse tortures he might devise are best left unspoken. Fortunately, Hawthorne finds himself more inclined towards Hester's feelings, and after giving Dimmesdale over to Chillingworth for nearly a decade, he releases him from his bondage.

The minister's final revelation of his own "scarlet letter" and ultimate escape from his fiendish foe into the grace of Heavenly repentance also serve as the backdrop for Hawthorne's concluding comments on Chillingworth as a Satanic embodiment. Catching Dimmesdale on the verge of his public confession, Chillingworth rushes to halt the proceedings, only to be balked at last by an undeceived minister: "Ha, tempter! Methinks thou art too late!...Thy power is not what is was! With God's help I shall escape thee now!" (Hawthorne 265). With the existence of Dimmesdale's sin laid bare before the awestruck Puritan assembly, the corrupting power of the demon-physician, who worked his Satanic sorcery in secret throughout the tale, also ends. As the minister falls stricken upon the scaffold, Chillingworth, all his devious machinations finally unable to secure the destruction of Dimmesdale's soul which he has sought all long, is left only his bitter lament, "Thou hast escaped me!" (268).

Thus deprived of his chosen prey, Chillingworth's "evil principle was left with no further material to support it" (Hawthorne 272). With no aim towards which to focus the evil machinations of his mind, Chillingworth's "strength and energy - all his vital and intellectual force - seemed at once to desert him; insomuch that he positively withered up...like an uprooted weed that lies wilting in the sun" (272). This striking image, affirming the traditional vision of the Light of Holiness scattering the shadowy creatures of Sin, places the intellectually rooted, mind-torturing deviltry of Roger Chillingworth
distinctly within the established binary of Good and Evil. With his vengeance, the sole function of his existence, abruptly ended, the Evil that is Chillingworth vanishes from Boston and then from The Scarlet Letter as swiftly and suddenly as it had appeared, returning to the fate of all the perpetually salvationless Satanic embodiments; to wander the tracks of exile in eternal search of "more devil's work" (272) at which to employ the poisonous prescriptions of an Evil mind.

These mendicant and intellectualized qualities of the Hawthornian Satanic embodiment reappear most powerfully in one of his last short works, "Ethan Brand." The story's chief diabolic character, the titular Brand, represents Evil as "the separation of head from heart" (Gollin 85). A force of purely Evil intellect, Ethan Brand should embody the culmination of a trend visible in Hawthorne's tales and sketches, wherein "such experimenters as Rappaccinni and Alymer" (85) dabbled too much in the playground of the mind and were rendered the worse for their aspirations, but in fact is a character much nearer to, and perhaps even surpassing, The Scarlet Letter's Roger Chillingworth.

Returning to the lime kiln which was once his employment and home, Brand arrives amid a series of dark forebodings. His "not mirthful, but slow, even solemn" (Hawthorne, EB 311) roar of laughter heralds his entrance, pealing frightfully through the forests like the trumpet of the damned giant Nimrod in the thirty-first of Dante's Infernal cantos, and the hill-couched kiln itself, with its "oven-mouth" and "massive iron door" from which spurt "smoke and jets of flame." (312), is rendered as resembling "nothing so much as the private entrance to the infernal regions" (312), and is a clear figure for the Medieval portal to the Abyss, the Hell-mouth. With the scene thus diabolically draped,

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7 These scientists appear respectively in "Rappaccinni's Daughter" and "The Birthmark." They are clearly figures of excessive intellect and perhaps even Evil, but lack the definitive diabolic associations to make them Satanic embodiments, and hence are not relevant to detailed examination here.
Brand steps to the stage. Cast in the garish light of the furnace, he is described by Hawthorne as follows:

To a careless eye there appeared nothing very remarkable in his aspect, which was that of a man in a coarse, brown, country-made suit of clothes, tall and thin, with the staff and heavy shoes of a wayfarer. As he advanced, he fixed his eyes - which were very bright - intently upon the brightness of the furnace, as if he beheld, or expected to behold, some object worthy of note within it. (Hawthorne, *EB* 314)

Brand’s overall normalcy of appearance dissociates him somewhat from the Transcendental idea of an internal, intellectual Evil manifest in some fashion through a topical defect such as Chillingworth’s caiphatic spine, but he is not completely divorced from this mode of representation. His wayfaring garb hearkens ultimately back to the Medieval idea of the earth-wandering Devil, but also strongly figures the first Satanic embodiment, Cain, an association furthered by Brand’s very name, which echoes the “mark” placed upon Cain by God as a sign of his sinful and marginal status among men.8

Then there is the matter of the gimlet eyes, “which gleamed like fires within the entrance of a mysterious cavern” (314). As with Chillingworth, Brand’s burning eyes clearly reference an outward manifestation of an internalized Evil, a trope to which Hawthorne this time gives additional aural support in the form of Ethan Brand’s maniacal laughter. This laughter, which frames the tale itself, is described as “the most terrible modulation of the human voice” (315) and, even more tellingly, as the “fearfully appropriate” noise of “fiends or hobgoblins” (316) because it is a vocalization of their demonically dissonant natures.

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8 See *Genesis* 4:15.
While these four traits -- garments, name, flaming eyes, and fiendish laughter -- when taken in sum provide the superficial evidence of Brand's diabolic monstrosity, the overwhelming source of his Evil is, in keeping with the Transcendental precepts, intellectual in nature, and is rendered in the particular terms of an "Unpardonable Sin" (Hawthorne, _EB_ 312). The quest for this sin, "a sin so heinous that it was beyond even God's mercy to pardon it" (Gollin 97), is what leads Brand from his hellish lime kiln to the four corners of the world and, having succeeded, back again. When Bartram, Ethan's surrogate lime-burner, inquires as to the location of the Unpardonable Sin, Brand responds by placing a finger "on his own heart" (Hawthorne, _EB_ 315). This gesture symbolizes the internal nature of the Sin, but Brand's own testimony determines that he would have been more accurate to tap upon his temple, for the Unpardonable Sin is Hawthorne's clearest construction of intellectual Evil in his entire corpus of works. Brand proudly describes it as: "A sin that grew within my own breast...A sin that grew nowhere else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims!" (318).

The potency of this Unpardonable Sin is quickly demonstrated when a group of curious villagers arrive to reacquaint themselves with the returned wanderer. In this scene, which conflates Brand and his Sin with the trio of dissolute, besotted townsmen whom he terms no better than "brute beasts" (320), Hawthorne makes a subtle statement suggesting that intellectual Evils such as Brand's surpass those natural aberrations and indulgences, the Vices, which were most commonly considered to be the downfall of man's spirit. With this intimation effectively reinforced by Brand's callous dismissal of the three drunkards, Hawthorne turns completely from his brief, comparative digression into Vice back to his truer subject, and proceeds to elaborate both the intellectual details of the Unpardonable Sin and the dissociative, dehumanizing quality of its Evil.

In describing the Sin's genesis within Brand, he writes:
Then ensued a vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his mind and heart. The Idea that had possessed his life had operated as a means of education...it had raised him from the level of an unlettered laborer to stand on a star-lit eminence, whither the philosophers of the earth, laden with the lore of universities, might vainly strive to clamber after him. (Hawthorne *EB* 325)

This distortion of the intellect to monstrous proportions and propensities is a deconstruction of the traditional nobility of scholarly reason and learning. The function of Brand's immense knowledge is not to further any humanitarian end, but to satisfy his own perverse curiosity about the existence of an Unpardonable Sin, and it is this grave misuse of his mind that directly results in the death of his emotional faculties. Ethan's heart, "had withered, - had contracted, - had hardened, - had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold on the magnetic chain of humanity...and was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment" (326). This excess of calculating scientific rationalism, reflecting both Chillingworth's incessant probing into Dimmesdale's secret heart and Iago's diabolic puppet-mastering in *Othello*, reaches its apex in the tale's allusory story of Ester, "the very girl whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul in the process" (321). The devastation of love and beauty, the inferred subjects of the "Ester-experiment," are the ultimate testament to the severing from humanity which attends the Unpardonable Sin. Ethan Brand, in his extreme intellectual depravity, has inflicted unnamed diabolic tortures upon unknown numbers of individuals, and doubtless has destroyed them all in a similar fashion to Ester. Reminded by his recollection of the girl that "it is no delusion. There is an Unpardonable Sin" (321), Brand affirms that he is no longer fit to keep the company of men, and it is based upon this societal schism that the narrator at last confirms Ethan as a
Satanic embodiment, saying, "the moment his moral nature had ceased to keep pace with his intellectual development... Ethan Brand became a fiend" (326).

Like Roger Chillingworth, Ethan Brand is wholly defined by the Evil he embodies. At the tale's conclusion, standing alone upon Graylock and once more returned to the lime kiln from whence his search began, Brand recognizes that his quest, and hence his existence is drawing hard towards its end. Commenting on this scene, Rita Gollin observes that Brand "shows no remorse. He makes no effort to lie, evade the truth, or pervert it. He acknowledges what he has destroyed, his sense of fulfillment unqualified by regret" (Gollin 95). Indeed, far from quailing, Brand celebrates his success in plumbing the fathoms of Evil, saying: "What more have I to seek? what more to achieve?...My task is done, and well done" (326). Wholly inhumanized by his accelerated intellect, and with no more challenges to glut his Evil mind, Brand mounts the hillside to the top of his kiln. There, poised above the furnace like "a fiend on the verge of plunging into his gulf of intensest torment" (327), he delivers his final farewell to "Mother Earth" and "mankind" (327), long since cast off in the wake of his Evil, and commands himself to the flames: "Come, deadly element of Fire, - henceforth my familiar friend! Embrace me, as I do thee!" (327). These lines, which "pervert the rhetoric of friendship and familiarity" (Gollin 97) reflect the ultimately destructive force of Evil, particularly intellectual Evil, upon society; a force which, at least in Hawthorne's renditions, when it lacks external sources against which to project its disintegrating capabilities, must finally turn inward upon itself: Thus Ethan Brand's immolation, like Roger Chillingworth's withering and sudden disappearance, represents the self-defeating nature of an evil that dissociates man from his humanity. Having captured the Unpardonable Sin and seeing no greater evils left to pursue, Brand has no recourse but to cast himself back into the very fires which forged his Satanic essence, leaving only his "heart made of marble" (328) and the echoes of his fiendish laughter as testaments to the harrowing depths of his diabolical inhumanity.
These echoes, like the Satanic embodiment itself in Hawthorne's works, must finally fade into silence due to the very nature of the system within which they exist. While he makes great strides in developing the Transcendental concept of Evil, Hawthorne is finally limited by his inability to fully escape the constructs of the traditional dualism of Good and Evil. His Satanic embodiments, like Poe's, blend traits old and new, partially blurring the traditional understanding of the binary by bestowing archetypally good traits upon diabolic characters, but there Hawthorne's work ends, and it will remain for Herman Melville to complete his labors in his masterpiece, *Moby Dick*.

As he sets about this task, the models of his literary precursors are never far from Melville's mind. In the crucible of his creativity, the Transcendental images of Poe and Hawthorne are melded with the Miltonic vision of the Satanic will and the Shakespearean convention of paradigmatic inversion to provide the basis for one of the most powerful characters in the Western canon, Captain Ahab. The crippled avenger of Melville's tale, Ahab, who "seems noble but is in fact evil" (Reynolds 157), is the dark, Satanic half of the central binary in a novel "replete with dual oppositions" (Novak 120). His counterpart is the "mystical leviathan" (Reynolds 30) Moby Dick, the great White Whale who "seems to embody the living God" (30). These two elements, the diabolic Captain and the Deific whale, are the crux of Melville's disintegration of the traditional Medieval binary of Good and Evil; a paradigm shift which surpasses all previous American efforts like the surge of a typhoon wiping away a wandering bark. Before the full scope of Melville's systemic destabilization can be properly conceived and appreciated, however, it is necessary to examine the particular facets of his iconographic inversions, for it is in the mighty contest between Captain Ahab and Moby Dick that the depths of the novel's subversion of the traditional binary is most ringingly represented.

In creating Ahab, Melville, as David Reynolds observes, forged "a fully American figure who nevertheless transcends American culture...as an imaginative synthesis of many of the most visible stereotypes in American popular culture" (Reynolds 551). The
particularly Transcendental aspects of Ahab bear their debt to Hawthorne and Poe, whose works and characters, such as Chillingworth and Ethan Brand, the nefarious Raven and even mad Roderick Usher, were largely influential on Melville's art. However, Reynolds goes on to note, Ahab is "not only quintessentially American, [but] also a literary figure of mythic stature...permeated with archetypal resonances" (551). Melville's Ahab is "the evil Ahab described in 1 Kings; he is the doomed overreacher of the Renaissance; he is Faust, Lear, Prometheus" (551): he is all of these and more, certainly, but what Ahab chiefly represents is "an embodiment of that fallen angel or demi-god who in Christendom was variously named Lucifer, Devil, Adversary, Satan" (Murray 40).

Like his precursory Transcendental Satanic embodiments, Ahab bears aspects of both the traditional Medieval concept of the Devil and its Renaissance reifications. Ahab's own name, as Reynolds observed, is a reference to the Biblical king who worshipped the demon Baal and whose "evil in the sight of the Lord" (Hayford 69n.4), eventually provoked the Old Testament God's omnipotent wrath and sealed his own doom. In his stubborn refusal to heed the prophetic warnings of Elijah, King Ahab's character invokes something of the Hebraic root of Satan as one who "opposes" or "antagonizes" (Forsyth 4), but the text of *Moby Dick* is replete with associations between Ahab and the Devil, both titular and otherwise, which are much more powerful and resonant than the Scriptural origins of his name. He is called a "lord of Leviathans" (Melville 114), which aligns him with a more obvious Biblical incarnation of the Devil, "the dragon in the sea" (*Isaiah* 27:1) of Isaiah's second prophecy, and is attended by a small court of minor demons in the form of the serpentine Fedallah and his men. Ahab himself invokes the name

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9 The profundity of Melville's artistic relationship with (and debt to) Hawthorne has been well documented, both by critics and by the correspondences of the two authors. For a detailed treatment of Melville's less well-known relationship to Poe's works, particularly in regard to their influence on *Moby Dick*, see Jack Scherring's "The Bottle and the Coffin", *Poe Newsletter* 1 (1969).
of the Devil and Satan numerous times in his speech, and late in the story, while gazing at
the doubloon he has transfixed to the mast as a bounty on the head of Moby Dick, the
Captain muses, "look here, - three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is
Ahab; the volcano, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, the victorious fowl, that,
too, is Ahab; all are Ahab" (Melville 359), making a firm association between himself and
the Devil as named in the first of Isaiah's visions of the diabolic.10

Beyond this nominal association with Lucifer, however, Ahab also is shown to
possess that self-same sin for which the "light-bearer" was cast into Hell. After Ahab
righted the course of the Pequod, which had lost her compass to the typhoon's lightning,
Melville writes, "In his fiery eyes of scorn and triumph, you then saw Ahab in all his fatal
pride" (Melville 425). This Pride, the traditional flaw of the Devil, is most marked in the
Captain when, accused of blasphemy by the First-mate, Starbuck, Ahab snarls, "Talk not
to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me...Who's over me?" (144). But
Ahab will not rest with a kinship to the Devil based solely upon a shared sin. In a ringing
address to the storm-lightning's "clear spirit of clear fire" (416), the Captain elevates his
association with the Satanic to a previously unimagined level:

I own thy speechless, placeless power; said I not so? Nor was it wrung
from me; nor do I now drop these links. Thou canst blind; but I can grope.
Thou canst consume, but I can be ashes...Light though thou be, thou
leapest out of darkness; but I am darkness leaping out of light, leaping out
of thee! The javelins cease; open eyes; see, or not? There burn the flames!
Oh, thou magnanimous! now do I glory in my genealogy. But thou art but
my fiery father; my sweet mother I know not...There lies my puzzle, but

10 See Isaiah 14:12-14.
thine is greater. Thou knowest not how came ye, hence callest thyself
unbegun. I know that of me, which thou knowest not of thyself; oh, thou
omnipotent...Here again with haughty agony, I read my sire.

(Melville 417)
The language of this passage is an incredible figuring of Ahab railing, as Lucifer might, at
the Deity who created him. The diabolical significance of Ahab tracing his heritage to
Divine fire is twofold. First, it recalls the state of the unfallen archangel, who was,
according to tradition, the first-formed of God's creatures and who thus finds his paternity
directly in God, but second, and more importantly, it also calls to mind the expelled
Lucifer, a Devil whose paternal origins are likewise in fire, though not the vital flames of
Divine creativity, but the lightning of Deific wrath.

Traditionally, Lucifer suffers a physical change that manifests the alteration in his
nature from angel to archfiend as he falls from Heaven into Hell, and Melville's Satanic
embodiment is no exception to this treatment. Ahab bears the requisite deformity, a
"barbaric white leg...fashioned from the polished bone of the sperm whale's jaw" (Melville
110), but this garish prosthetic limb is not the sole outward profession of his internal
monstrosity. Rather, the whole figure of Captain Ahab is portrayed by Melville in sternly
Satanic terms:

He looked like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has
overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them, or taking
away one particle from their compacted aged robustness...Threading its
way out from among his grey hairs, and continuing right down one side of
his tawny scorched face and neck...[was] a slender rod-like mark, lividly
whitish. It resembled that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the
straight, lofty trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts
down it...leaving the tree still greenishly alive, but branded.

(Melville 109-10)
The image of Ahab as branded might easily be taken as reference to Cain, Biblical father of all earthly monstrosities, and indeed the water-wed Captain shares Cain's mendicant traits as well, though he wanders the oceans of the world and not the wastes of Nod; but it is equally, if not more correct to read Melville's description as again aligning Ahab directly with the Devil, who was traditionally depicted as burned and scarred by the Almighty's lightning as it hurled him from Heaven.  

With the physical aspects of Ahab's diabolic nature thus firmly fixed, it remains for Melville to complete his Satanic embodiment by developing the intellectual nature of his Evil, thereby fusing the Medieval and Renaissance visions of the Devil and carrying on the Transcendental torch of those demons which haunted the works of Poe and Hawthorne. The author obliges, making Ahab's intellectual prowess apparent even before the Captain has physically entered the novel through the appraisal of the Pequod's co-owner, Captain Peleg, who informs Ishmael, "Captain Ahab doesn't speak much; but, when he does speak, then you may well listen. Mark ye, be forewarned; Ahab's above the common; Ahab's been in colleges, as well as 'mong the cannibals; been used to deeper wonders than the waves" (Melville 76). This voracity of intellect is cast as Evil through its association with the monomaniac pursuit of the White Whale that has driven Ahab to madness:

in [Ahab's] narrow-flowing monomania...not one jot of his great natural intellect had perished. That before living agent, now became the living instrument...so that far from having lost his strength, Ahab, to that one end, did now possess a thousand fold more potency than ever he had sanely brought to bear upon any one reasonable object.  

(Melville 161)

Ahab, intent on "an audacious, immitigable, and supernatural revenge" (162) upon Moby Dick for the reaping of his leg will, as intimated by Peleg, employ his control of speech

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11 Such accounts are extant during the Middle Ages (see The Chester Cycle), but the most likely source for Melville's description was Milton's Paradise Lost, whose full impact upon Ahab as a Satanic embodiment will be developed later in this chapter.
and language to draw him nearer to his goal. As Louise Barnett notes, "Ahab is a powerful voice" (Barnett 110), and it is through this voice that the inversionary action of perverting the logos of reason and logic via the abuse of its primary embodiment, spoken language, a central trait in Renaissance and Transcendental Satanic characters, finds its development in Ahab. Barnett's further comment, "since other men exist for Ahab as tools of his will or limited versions of himself, his language is primarily an instrument of self-assertion and self-validation" (110-11), draws a parallel between Melville's Captain and Shakespeare's master of linguistic manipulation, Iago, and though Ahab is ultimately less subtle than the diabolic Venetian, his unique combination of speech and ritual proves more than sufficient for the task of converting his "unthinking and unknowing crew" (111) to his will.

Addressing his men upon the Pequod's quarter-deck, Ahab reveals his intention to hunt Moby Dick only after he has carefully primed his crew through a speech "in which each utterance is prescribed and the end result is to confirm a value he already holds" (Barnett 112). The following exchange between the Captain and his crew:

"What do ye do when ye see a whale, men?"

"Sing out for him!"

"Good!...And what do ye do next, men?"

"Lower away, and after him!"

"And what tune is it ye pull to, men?"

"A dead whale or a stove boat!" (Melville 141)

is a prime example of Ahab's linguistic manipulations. By enacting the ritual that is whaling, the ritual most familiar to the men of the Pequod, Ahab "guides the mystified crew to verbal responses - seemingly innocuous - that reinforce each step of his unfolding plan and intensify their feeling" (112-13). With the crew thus fevered, the opportunity is ripe for Ahab to reveal his true goal, but the prudent Captain elects to hedge his bets further. Embellishing language with action, he displays the Spanish doubloon and, subtly playing to the innately capitalistic (or perhaps simply avaricious) natures of the sailors, sets
a bounty on the head of Moby Dick: "Whosoever of ye raises me a white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw...he shall have this gold ounce, my boys!" (Melville 142). It is only after this trump, which "generates the most effective motive to spot Moby Dick: self interest" (Todd 6), that Ahab deigns to establish the exact nature of the whale and its particular relationship to him, and by then the crew is already won to his side, and responds resoundingly to the combination of rhetoric and fiscal incentive: "'Aye, aye!' shouted the harpooners and seamen, running closer to the excited old man: 'A sharp eye for the White Whale; a sharp lance for Moby Dick!'" (Melville 143).

While this gulling of the "unsophisticated crew" (Barnett 113) to his ends is a relatively simple matter for Ahab, one among them, Starbuck, the novel's voice of reason and temperance, remains initially aloof and unswayed. When Ahab perceives this, he embarks on a subtler form of linguistic perversion: temptation. Couching his words as those of the "little lower layer" (Melville 143), Ahab first calls to the mate's attention the universal uproar and approval of the men: "The crew, man, the crew! Are they not one and all with Ahab, in this matter of the whale?...Stand up amid the general hurricane, thy one tost sapling cannot, Starbuck!" (144), and when this rhetoric fails to win, the Captain falls back on a simple reduction of the whale's significance coupled with the archetypal vocal tactic of the Satanic embodiment, flattery, to bend Starbuck, whose "mere right-mindedness cannot stand against the demonry of Ahab" (Friedman 83) to his side:

Reckon it. 'Tis but to help strike a fin; no wondrous feat for Starbuck.

What is it more? From this one poor hunt, then, the best lance out of all Nantucket, surely he will not hang back...Ah! constrainings seize thee; I see! the billow lifts thee! Speak, but speak? - Aye, aye! thy silence, then, that voices thee. (Melville 144)

Ahab acknowledges his linguistic conquest of Starbuck in a brief aside which illuminates the power and nature of the corrupting diabolic intellect: "Something shot from my dilated nostrils, he has inhaled it in his lungs. Starbuck now is mine, cannot oppose me now,
without rebellion" (144), and the totality of the Captain's triumph over mate and crew is registered by the narrator, Ishmael, who says, "a wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine" (155). Ahab proceeds to celebrate this victory by engaging in a ceremonial passing of the cup, an event which "is a widespread sign in various cultures of participation in and allegiance to a commonly recognized idea" (Todd 5). Here Ahab's actions represent a perversion of the Christian mass, particularly the "sacrament of communion" (5) in the same fashion that his manipulations of the language embody a perversion of the Divine logos towards diabolic ends, and these two distortions together prefigure the Captain's ultimate deconstruction of Christian ritual and speech in the one hundred and thirteenth chapter of Moby Dick, "The Forge."

Blending the pagan, Epic motif of the casting of a weapon with the Christian rite of baptism, Ahab's forging of his harpoon is a mighty example of the Satanic embodiment inverting the very tenets of the tradition which defines it. 12 Fittingly set in a floating Hell, where fiery sparks flash and the Parsee Fedallah and his "bunch of lucifers" (Melville 404) glide sinisterly through the shadows as Ahab himself beats the iron for his spear into submission, the Satanic baptism of the harpoon utterly "corrupts the Christian intent" (Todd 7). Ahab first "baptizes an object, not a person" (7), and then not with purifying water but with the heathen blood of Tashtego, Queequeg, and Daggoo, and finally commends his actions with a blessing that not only invokes the Devil, but "intentionally rejects God" (7) in one of the fiercest passages in all of literature: "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!" deliriously howled Ahab, as the malignant iron scorchingly devoured the baptismal blood" (Melville 404). What is most interesting about Ahab's invocation, however, is not its blasphemous inversion of Christian theology, but the

12 Like the Captain himself, Ahab's harpoon has its own diabolic precursors. It figures the pitchfork associated with the Devil in Medieval iconography, and also the Achillean spear of Milton's Satan.
specifics of that inversion. The Latin phrase employed by Ahab is shortened from the longer "Ego non baptizo te in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti - sed in nomine Diaboli" (Sanborn 212), and the explicit excision of the Son and the Holy Ghost on Melville's part elevates the reading of Ahab as a Satanic embodiment almost to the realm of a Satanic incarnation by emphasizing the "exclusiveness and immediacy of Ahab's quarrel with the Father" (214). It is expressly for the resolution of this quarrel that the harpoon has been forged, and in his dark baptism of the weapon, Ahab "infuses it with the virtues necessary to complete his sworn vengeance: 'power, duration, and inflexibility,' his virtues as symbolized by iron" (Todd 8).

This equation of Ahab and iron becomes indispensable to the complete comprehension of Melville's Satanic embodiment. All the facets of Ahab heretofore assembled -- his topical monstrosities, his Luciferian pride, his perversion of the logos and the ritual trappings of Christian tradition -- are each qualities shared to some extent by the common Transcendental diabolic figure. Ahab may possess them in greater quantities or employ them in more profoundly Evil ways, but judged by their standards alone, he would be an embellishment upon the efforts of Poe and Hawthorne, no more. It is only in his quality of "ironness," a trait reflected in his abundant and irrecoiling volition, that Ahab at last departs from his predecessors, sailing off to plumb the waters of Melville's paradigm shift alone.

This Ahabian will, which pushes the Pequod's Captain to go on "beyond all hope of redemption" (Mulvihill 22) and then beyond all constraints of damnation as he quests unceasingly towards his single, chosen object, is a characteristic derived directly from that archetype of the diabolic volition, Milton's Satan. As such, Ahab's reflections of Paradise Lost's antihero are many. His figure, whose "whole high, broad form seemed made of solid bronze, and shaped in an unalterable mould, like Cellini's cast Perseus" (Melville 110), and his mien, which finds "an infinity of firmest fortitude, a determinate, unsurrenderable willfulness, in the fixed and fearless, forward dedication of [his] glance" (111) both mirror
the Epic qualities of Milton's archfiend. His visage, "stricken...in all the nameless regal overbearing dignity of some mighty woe" (111) also parallels Satan's, whose face "Deep scars of Thunder had intrenched, and care / Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows / Of dauntless courage, and considerate Pride" (Milton I:601-3), and his ceaseless "vindictiveness against the whale" (Melville 161) matches Satan's declaration of "waiting revenge" (Milton I:604) upon the God who cast him into damnation.

This will to avenge his loss drives Ahab, as it did Satan, to challenge his more powerful foe even after he has initially fallen, and like Milton's Devil, Melville's Captain gives his will a voice in a series of profound soliloquies which bear a deep debt to Paradise Lost. Ahab, despairing that he shall ever find Moby Dick, presents the following apostrophe to the sun:

Thou sea-mark! thou high and mighty Pilot! thou tellest me truly where I am - but canst thou cast the least hint where I shall be? Or canst thou tell where some other thing besides me is this moment living? Where is Moby Dick? This instant thou must be eyeing him. (Melville 411-2)

The speech finds its roots in Satan's querying of Uriel, angel of the Sun, as to the location of Earthly Paradise in Book III of Milton's poem, and its object, the helian orb, is also the target of Satan's mountain-top monologue in Book IV, though the actual substance of the Devil's Niphatean diatribe is better echoed in Ahab's sunset soliloquy. The initial phrases of the Captain's speech neatly mirror Satan's spasm of anguish and remorse over his fallen nature:

The diver sun - slow dived from noon, - goes down; my soul mounts up! she wearies with her endless hill. Is, then, the crown too heavy that I wear? this Iron Crown of Lombardy?...'Tis iron - that I know - not gold. 'Tis split, too, that I feel; the jagged edge galls me so, my brain seems to beat against
the solid metal; aye, steel skull, mine...Oh! time was, when as sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset soothed. No more. This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly! damned in the midst of Paradise!
(Melville 147)

As the soliloquy unfolds, however, Ahab, like Satan, seals up his despair in the fathomless vaults of his will, and issues a challenge to his nemesis:

What I've dared, I've willed; and what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad - Starbuck does; but I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened!...The prophecy was that I should be dismembered; and - Aye! I lost this leg. I now prophecy that I will dismember my dismembreer. (Melville 147)

With open war thus declared on Moby Dick, Ahab concludes his symphony with strains that are eloquently evocative of the purely Satanic will:

I will not say as schoolboys do to bullies - Take some one of your own size; don't pommel me! No, ye've knocked me down, and I am up again; but ye have run and hidden. Come forth...come, Ahab's compliments to ye; come and see if ye can swerve me. Swerve me? ye cannot swerve me...The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way! (Melville 147)

This freight-train of Ahab's monstrous, Satanic volition most manifests itself in the Captain's "intense bigotry of purpose" (Melville 141). With the sole focus of his existence the intent to marshal the force of his hatred and then "wreak that hate upon [Moby Dick]" (144), Ahab bids farewell to all other pursuits. His monomania is not without penalty, however. The simple pleasures of life, symbolized by Ahab's pipe, vanish from his mind, a
fact he recognizes when laments, "How now...this smoking no longer soothes...What business have I with this pipe? This thing that is meant for sereneness...I'll smoke no more" (114). With that, Ahab drowns his pipe, but this sinking of earthly pleasures, while a noteworthy sign of Ahab's devotion to his task, becomes a small thing in comparison with the other sacrifices Melville's Captain will offer to the bloody appetites of his quest for Moby Dick.

The first of these is sleep. Ahab's maniacal focus on the hunt so dominates his mind that it bereaves him of his bed. Early in the voyage the crew, noting his nocturnal pacings of the deck, observe that Ahab is not in his bed "more than three hours out of twenty-four" (Melville 113), and Melville later intimates that even when Ahab is at rest, his seething volition robs him of peace when he wonders, "Ah, God! what trances of torments does that man endure who is consumed with one unachieved revengeful desire. He sleeps with clenched hands; and wakes with bloody nails in his palms" (174). As the hunt for Moby Dick draws towards its end, however, Ahab's insomnia increases until not "at any time, by night or day, could the mariners now step upon the deck, unless Ahab was before them...Day after day, and night after night, he went no more beneath the planks; whatever he wanted from the cabin, that thing he sent for" (438).

Beyond his sleep-deprivation, Ahab also sacrifices more intangible ideals, casting away, as he did his pipe, any aspect of being that might stand to derail his purpose. This divestiture of his humanity, an act enabled only by the Satanic force of his volition, occurs in two memorable scenes. The first of these involves Pip, the mad Negro cabin boy who was, by Ahab's own admission, "tied to [him] by cords woven of [his] own heart-strings" (Melville 428), and comes to be Ahab's nearest companion until that very companionship and the childlike purity of Pip's devotion to the Captain threatens to swerve Ahab. When Pip vows that he will never desert him, Ahab responds, "If thou speakest thus to me much more, Ahab's purpose keels up in him. I tell thee no; it cannot be" (436), and when Pip persists to the extent of offering himself as a substitute for Ahab's "one lost leg" (436), it
requires the threat of death: "Weep so, and I will murder thee" (436) to at last silence him. This separation of the Captain and the cabin boy divorces Ahab from the thing which "touched [his] inmost centre" (428), symbolically segregating him from the strands of human love embodied in little Pip, and thereby providing a powerful testament to the force of Ahab's monomaniac will to the hunt.

With interpersonal love thus broken, only the bonds of familial love remain to draw Ahab back from the abyss of his fate. This familial umbilicus is represented by Starbuck, in whose eye Ahab, on the eve of his encounter with Moby Dick, sees his "far off home" (Melville 444). The last vestiges of human emotion stirred in him, Ahab recalls "that young girl-wife I wedded past fifty, and sailed for Cape Horn the next day, leaving but one dent in my marriage pillow - wife? wife? - rather a widow with her husband alive!" (443), and then proceeds to lament "the madness, the frenzy, the boiling blood and the smoking brow, with which...old Ahab has furiously, foamingly chased his prey - more a demon than a man!" (443-4). This final surge of some Good essence in Ahab is made concrete by yet another image drawn from Paradise Lost. Melville writes: "From beneath his slouched hat Ahab dropped a tear into the sea; nor did all the Pacific contain such wealth as that one wee drop" (443). Like Satan, who beholds his army of fallen followers laying shattered upon the flaming lake and weeps in remembrance of what they had been, what they had lost, so too does Ahab for a single, true instant express sincere regret for the hard course of his iron-railed will.

One tear, and that is all.

Just as Satan recovers himself and stands more motivated than ever to indulge his will towards revenge, Ahab also turns from Starbuck's entreaties to shift the Pequod's course for home. His Satanic will to "hunt Moby Dick to his death" (Melville 146) destroys the final vestiges of his humanity, dropping the virtue of familial love like a "last, cindered apple to the soil" (444) in its wake, and leaving Ahab to stand in isolation from
the world; an inhuman embodiment not only of the Devil's evil, but of the ceaseless will to work that evil on the earth.

In the face of this diabolic volition, no deterrent can maintain itself. Like Milton's Satan, who braved trackless Chaos to find the objects of his hunt in their Edenic bower, Melville's Ahab, his whole will committed to his monomania, thunders over every impediment in his path. Neither the dashing of his navigational quadrant nor the magnetic reversal of his compass can keep Ahab from tracking Moby Dick. With the force of his volition honed upon the White Whale, the Captain himself becomes the needle "that will point as true as any" (Melville 425) the path to Moby Dick, and as he relentlessly dogs his quarry across the Pacific, even the winds of the typhoon, whose "gale comes from the eastward, the very course Ahab is to run for Moby Dick" (414) cannot in their seemingly Divine breath shunt the irrepressible course charted by Ahab's volition.13 Moby Dick's ultimate testament to the force of the Satanic volition, however, comes not from the gauntlet of obstacles that Ahab brushes aside, but from the fact that it is only when Ahab stands atop the look-out that the White Whale at last appears. On sighting his nemesis, the Captain cries: "the doubloon is mine, Fate reserved the doubloon for me. I only; none of ye could have raised the White Whale first" (446), and the text substantiates Ahab's claim, for it is indeed as if Moby Dick has risen solely to greet head-on the challenge of an Evil will, a will unadulterated by even the shreds of humanity, and in this second encounter, blast it wholly from existence. As Ahab and his "heart of wrought steel" (Melville 463) lowers into shark-infested waters and rushes the irresistible force of his volition to meet this challenge, however, we must arrest his motion long enough to examine the exact nature of the immovable object that is Moby Dick, for while we have devoted lengthy

13 The textual justification for reading the typhoon as a Divine censure of Ahab comes from Starbuck, who cries of the relentless winds and lighting: "God, God is against thee, old man; forbear! 'tis an ill voyage" (Melville 418).
detail to the Captain's role as a Satanic embodiment, we have given but little attention to
the novel's titular character, and without a proper illumination of the White Whale within
the terms of the binary between Good and Evil, the profound depths of Melville's
paradigm inversion in *Moby Dick* remain ultimately turbid.

What, then, is Moby Dick? This question has been viewed for nearly one hundred
and fifty years as central to understanding Melville's novel, and the critical responses have
been as many and varied as the multiplicity of irons bristling from the White Whale's "high
sparkling hump" (Melville 446). Of these, those which retain much of their presence in the
critical forum of the millennium include reading Moby Dick as a symbol of Nature; as a
projection of either the Freudian Superego or the phallus; and as a symbol of Death and
bereavement. While these and the numerous other conceptions of the Whale are
unquestionably valid as touching upon some aspect of Moby Dick's symbolic relevance,
the overwhelming voice of the critical collective resounds in support of reading Moby
Dick as an embodiment of the Deity.

Which particular Deity, however, remains a source of some contention. Several
passages in the novel link Moby Dick to Zeus, paralleling the White Whale to the "Great
Jove...incarnate in a snow-white bull" (164) and later furthering this association in a
description of the beauty of the Whale which reads: "Not the white bull Jupiter swimming
away with ravished Europa clinging to his graceful horns...not Jove, not that great majesty
Supreme! did surpass the glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam" (447). Such lines
would argue for viewing Moby Dick as a pagan deity, and would then render Ahab
something of a Crusader for Christianity, hunting out the idolaters' infidel god. In light of
the textual evidence supporting a reading of Ahab as a Satanic embodiment, however, this

14 See, respectively: Charles Olson. *Call Me Ishmael*. New York: City Light Books,
1947; David Simpson. *Fetishism and Imagination: Dickens, Melville, Conrad*. Maryland:
Johns Hopkins UP, 1982; and Neal Tolchin. *Mourning, Gender, and Creativity in the Art
seems unlikely, and forces us to narrow the focus to a Christian sphere. Within these waters, Harold Bloom finds that the White Whale "is not God, nor even God's surrogate, [but] what the ancient Gnostics called the Demiurge" (Bloom 5), and while Ahab has sufficiently Gnostic traits to bear up this reading, it must be remembered that Gnosticism is "an ancient Christian heresy" (Dillingham 92) whose roots rest in the Old Testament and whose Demiurgic deity, while not precisely Christian, shares a great deal with the "God of the Old Dispensation, the God who brought Jeremiah into darkness...the God adopted by the fire-and-brimstone Puritans" (Murray 43); the God which would have been acutely familiar to Melville in the "Calvinistic conception of an afflicting Deity and his strict commandments" (Murray 42).

Textual support for this reading of the White Whale as an embodiment of the Christian God, particularly the God of Calvin, is abundant. Father Mapple, in his memorable sermon on Jonah, notes that "God came upon [the prophet] in the whale" (Melville 50), while the narrator later describes Ahab "chasing with curses a Job's whale around the world" (162) in a ship whose "masts stood stiffly up like the spines of the three old kings of Cologne" (60),¹⁵ and the bizarrely prophetic Gabriel of the Jereboam rants that "the White Whale [is] no less a being than the Shaker God incarnated" (267).¹⁶

Beyond these appellate associations, Moby Dick, like the Christian Divinity, "was ubiquitous [and] had actually been encountered in opposite latitudes at one and the same instant of time" (158), and was by extension "immortal (for immortality is but ubiquity in time)" (158). Likewise, in addition to these intangible, clearly supernatural aspects, the form of the Whale itself bespeaks a certain divinity of its own, as when "his whole

¹⁵ The Cathedral of Cologne was thought to be the resting place of the remains of the three Magi (Hayford 67n.2)

¹⁶ The Shakers were a Puritan sect mainly located in Pennsylvania who were noted for their literal interpretations of Scripture (Hayford 268n4).
marbleized body formed a high arch...and waringly waving his bannered flukes in the air, the grand god revealed himself, sounded, and went out of sight" (448). More than even the majestic splendor of "his uncommon bulk" (159), however, it is the "snow-white wrinkled forehead [and] high, pyramidal white hump" (159) of Moby Dick which most strikingly denote his place as a Christian Deific embodiment.

The whiteness of the whale, to which Melville devotes an entire chapter, is the color traditionally associated with Goodness and Divinity, with "celestial innocence and love" (Melville 164n.*). Comparing the White Whale to a white horse, which is a symbol of Christ, and a white albatross, likewise a symbol of the angels, the narrator concludes that the Whale's hue is "the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, nay, the very veil of the Christian's Deity" (169). Yet we must not forget that this is the Old Testament God, a God in whom "unseen terrors lurk beneath the surface of beauty" (Novak 126), and a God who was more than willing to wield the sword of his omnipotent wrath against his enemies.

It is in this combative pose of Melville's God that we can best form the binary between the White Whale and Captain Ahab, for in their violent opposition they sit at the poles of the dualism, foils in every conceivable way. Considered carefully, this relationship of Whale to Captain demonstrates Moby Dick's complete inversion of the traditional systemic concept of Good and Evil. Working out of Shakespeare's accomplishment in Othello, which pits a hyper-intellectual Satanic embodiment against a savage, marginal, almost monstrous Deific embodiment, Melville elevates the Bard's deconstruction to a new level. In Ahab, volition and intellect have merged to create a Captain whose diabolic essence is best characterized by those qualities it has perverted from the traditionally Divine logos, while in Moby Dick, the standard conception of the Deity as a super-ethereal entity is reduced beyond even a Moorish form to reside in a vessel which, regardless of the grandeur of its shape, is inescapably a beast.
Yet in spite of this profound shifting of the Medieval paradigm, which finds the once-monstrous Devil embodied in a wholly human, intellectual, and volitional Captain Ahab and the once-lucent Deity cast into the animalistic, irrational, and instinctual body of the White Whale, Melville nonetheless attempts to reinforce the strictures of the tradition he has inverted by having the "whole novel culminate in the destruction of Ahab and his crew by the 'predestining head' of Moby Dick" (Reynolds 159). Unfortunately, much as Milton failed in his effort to contain Satan within a superficially traditional Paradise Lost, so too does Melville falter in his attempt. Ahab, chiefly because of the overwhelming echoes of Milton's Satan in his "most vast, but hollow" (Melville 144) chest, has become a character who creates an instability within the textual binary of Good and Evil even as the novel is in the process of asserting its most potent efforts towards the containment of the Satanic embodiment through a rhetoric of tradition.

As great as is the strength of Ahab's will to hunt down Moby Dick, however, it is not the sole factor permitting him to disintegrate the bonds of the traditional binary. Rather, it is coupled with a subtle undercurrent coursing through Moby Dick that evokes the Captain in heroic terms that are equal to, if not surpassing, those lavished upon Satan in Paradise Lost. In spite of the apparently dehumanizing force of Ahab's Satanic volition, the characters who encounter the Captain speak well, or even admiringly, of him. Captain Peleg, for example, avers: "I know Captain Ahab well...I know what he is - a good man - not a pious, good man...but a swearing good man" (Melville 77) and after recounting the existence of Ahab's wife and child, concludes "No, no, my lad; stricken, blasted, if he be, Ahab has his humanities" (77). In addition to these humane associations, Ahab is paid an ironic complement by the unlikeliest of sources, the landbound prophet Elijah,17 who, speaking of the quality of "soul," says of the Captain, "He's got enough, though, to make

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17 Elijah was the Biblical prophet charged with bringing God's Word to the idolatrous Ahab in I Kings.
up for all deficiencies of that sort in other chaps" (86). Both Peleg's and Elijah's comments intimate that Ahab is "extremely noble-spirited" (Mulvihill 23), and this nobility is reinforced by additional excerpts from the text that link Ahab to the Classical figures of Epic renown. The Captain's "intense thinking...makes him a Prometheus" (Melville 175), a figure whose rebellion and will afforded him, like Milton's Satan, a majestical stature, particularly in the eyes of the Romantics, and Ahab's sobriquet "Old Thunder" (86) likewise invests him "with a Zeus-like quality" (Mulvihill 24) that calls up an image of the mightiest Greek deity and his storming "weapons of godly outrage and retaliation" (24) which figures Melville's Captain as an avenger whose "task requires a thunderous effort and a lightning strike" (24).

In addition to these pagan associations, Moby Dick also develops Ahab's potential heroism in Christian terms. Like the wrinkled forehead of the White Whale, Ahab boasts a "ribbed brow" (Melville 403), and is described as a "grand, ungodly, god-like man" (76), which is indeed exactly what he is. By developing these antithetical strains of the Deific and the Demonic in his protagonist, Melville blurs the polarities of his binary, allowing his Satanic embodiment to shine with qualities that evoke in Ishmael, and doubtless the rest of the Pequod's crew, "a strange awe of [Ahab]; that sort of awe which [one] cannot at all describe" (77), but which is clearly an emotion one would better "ascribe only to God" (Bloom 4), and not to an incarnation of Evil.

These positive, heroic, quasi-Deific traits, when merged, as noted above, with the Satanic will, inform Captain Ahab with a "magnetic life" (Melville 146) which is nothing if not Shakespearean in both its grandeur and its tragedy. Faced with impossible odds, "tempted away from his quest by the direct appeals of Starbuck, the prophecies of Fedallah, and the panic of the sailors" (Todd 9), Ahab employs the combination of his Epic personality and his Satanic volition to stay both his course and the ship's in one of the most vivid scenes in the novel. Amid the mightiest throes of the typhoon, the Captain seizes his harpoon, from whose "keen steel barb there now came a leveled flame of pale,
forked fire" (Melville 418) and faces off against his nearly mutinous men. Melville describes the confrontation:

Petrified by [Ahab's] aspect, and still more shrinking from the fiery dart that he held, the men fell back in dismay, and Ahab again spoke:

"All your oaths to hunt the White Whale are as binding as mine; and heart, soul, and body, lungs and life, old Ahab is bound. And that ye may know to what tune this heart beats; look ye here; thus I blow out the last fear!" And with one blast of his breath he extinguished the flame.

(Melville 418)

And so, like Milton's Satan rousing his rebellious angels in the wake of their defeat and expulsion, Old Thunder marshals his crew once more to his cause and rolls on, unfailing in his will, immutable in his purpose, inexorable as the very waves upon which he rides to his predestined tilt against Moby Dick.

The three day war between Captain Ahab and the White Whale is a clash in which two titanic wills meet "forehead to forehead" (Melville 461). The riveting scenes make a bold attempt to bestow a finally traditional form upon fluxing paradigm of Good and Evil, figuring Ahab as the "representative...of that [Satanic] 'malignity,' assaulting the God who has implicitly sanctioned the acts of the devil" (Sanborn 229), but even in the face of destruction, Melville's Captain refuses to bend his head to the tenets of tradition that bestow the victory upon the Divine conqueror. Though innumerable forces rise against him, Ahab never sways in his final pursuit of the Whale. Voracious sharks he rows past with calm disdain. Stove boats and splintered legs he replaces. The last, moving entreaties of Starbuck he violently mutes, snarling, "in this matter of the whale, be the front of thy face to me as the palm of this hand - a lipless, unfeatured blank" (Melville 459) and, most notably, against the unexpected revelation of his dark prophecy through the Whale-bound resurrection of the vanished Fedallah, he holds firm, saying only, "Aye, Parsee! I see thee again...But I hold thee to the last letter of thy word. Where is the second hearse?" (464-
5). When that hearse, the shattered, dismantled, sinking Pequod, soon after appears, Ahab is faced with the climactic moment of his existence.

There is no decision for him to make.

Having earlier asked himself, "Is Ahab, Ahab?" (Melville 445), the Captain has been bearing out his bombastic answer, "Ahab is for ever Ahab" (459) in every will-spurred aspect of his hunt for Moby Dick. Now, at the end of the chase, he finds himself, like Shakespeare's Macbeth, forced to a last gesture of defiance. Having "reconciled [himself] to his relationship with Fate" (Sitney 133), Ahab gathers every fiber of his Satanic essence and flings it against his Almighty nemesis:

Ho, ho! from all your furthest bounds, pour ye now in, ye bold billows of my whole foregone life, and top this one piled comber of my death!
Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear!
(Melville 468)

The whole volitional, Satanic content of this declamation against the White Whale is immediately immortalized in an instant's action. With Ahab's last spear cast down like lightning upon Moby Dick, "the stricken whale flew forward, with ignighting velocity the line ran through the groove; - ran foul" (Melville 468). Melville's Captain will not have it so. Refusing to acknowledge any impediment to his iron way, "Ahab stooped to clear it" (468) and, in a testament to his existence as an embodiment of the Satanic will, "he did

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18 Fedallah's prophecy of Ahab's death foretold that the Captain could only be killed by hemp, and then only after seeing two hearses upon the sea, the first bearing the Parsee himself, who would pilot Ahab's way, and the second of wood hewn in America (Melville 410-11).
clear it" (468). As he succeeded in surmounting every barrier separating him from his chosen quarry, so too does Captain Ahab succeed in this last gesture of diabolic defiance, and with the line thus freed, Ahab is snapped from the boat, and from life, to continue his monomaniac pursuit of Moby Dick through the soundless waters of eternity.

It is in these last motions, tokens of his unyielding, iron will, that Ahab fully elevates himself beyond the earlier renditions of the Transcendental Satanic embodiment and demonstrates the completeness of his disruptive impact upon Melville's shifted binary of Good and Evil. Unlike Hawthorne's Roger Chillingworth and Ethan Brand, who also vanish from the pages of their respective stories, Ahab's death is not a reaffirmation of the traditional system, an elevation of Good over Evil, for Melville's Captain "goes down unconquered, fighting to the end" (Bloom 4). There is no going "gentle into that good night" (Thomas 1) for Ahab, no self-consumption by the Evil of his nature which validates the traditional superiority of Goodness. Ahab's will was to the hunt, and though he perishes, what he leaves behind is a powerful feeling of "the rightness of that sacrifice, the heroism of that quest" (Bloom 4). This stirring identification of audiences with Captain Ahab, perhaps most memorably phrased by William Faulkner, who expostulated upon completing Melville's novel: "There's a death for a man, now!" (Bloom MD 7), recalls the similar strains of the Romantic response to Milton's Satan, and it is in this critical reaction that Moby Dick and Paradise Lost find their truest jointure. Just as Milton endeavored to reinscribe his Satan within the confines of the traditional binary of Good and Evil by conforming to the standard, Scriptural outcome of the Serpent's Edenic actions, so too does Melville essay to restore the values of the Medieval tradition to the world of his shifted paradigm, only to join his poetic English precursor in failing at this task.

The mere fact of Ahab's death in his struggle against the Divine "retribution [and] swift vengeance" (Melville 468) of Moby Dick can no more hope to contain the titanic volition and tremendous valor of Melville's Captain than the Miltonic Devil's transmogrification into the draconian adder by the re-established logos of the Almighty
can hope to efface the glorious memory of Satan's Epic will and proud disdain of precisely such "dire arms" (Milton 1:94). Ahab, blending as he does the standard Transcendental aspects of the Satanic embodiment with a diabolic will never to succumb, never to yield, continues to shatter the proposed textual standards and systems of Moby Dick through the force of the indelible imprint his "earthquake life" (Melville 417) has left upon the novel. Even after he has plunged beneath "the great shroud of the sea" (469) and into the fathomless silence of death, the memory of Melville's Captain, following the final image of the Pequod, which, "like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her" (469), lingers over the last lines of the text, and in its brooding presence, the diabolic harpoon of Ahab's iron will carries on its course, darting forward to "strike through the mask" (144) of traditional representation and sound out those oceans which roll, all uncharted, beyond.
Conclusion

I call'd the devil, and he came.
And with awe his form I scan'd;
    He is not ugly.

- Heinrich Heine

The Devil is protean.

Consider the nature of the character as he is represented through the ages. The Devil is initially conceived as an incarnation of Evil; an entity upon which the Church Fathers of Medieval Europe could heap blame for the existence of every negative aspect of the universe. The function of this Medieval Devil, through both his sin and his damnation to Hell, was to elevate the goodness of the Christian Deity by offering a concrete example of the price levied against those who shunned God. The literature of the day supported this principle, creating a system of binary representation which revolved around the express polarities between God and the Devil. Dante's Lucifer was a silent, monstrous, trivisaged parody of the logos-bearing Trinitarian Deity, while the Devil of The Chester Cycle opposed vain Pride in his own luminosity to the sublime incandescence of God's Heavenly majesty, and fell from Grace. Likewise, the Devil's earthly forms, the Satanic embodiments whose Medieval forms are best related through such entities as the monsters of Beowulf, recalled these polarities on a more microcosmal scale. Malformed, malignant, and marginal, creatures like Grendel, his dam, and the dragon, were shown to be Evil
through their isolation, both spatially and anatomically, from the standards of human society.

Such Medieval representations of the Devil became the iconographic standards through which the character, in both his incarnate and his embodied forms, was defined. Yet the definitions do not hold, a fact attested by the changing nature of the Devil's representations in post-Medieval literature. The defining traits of Milton's Satan, for example, are superior volition and magniloquent language, two elements formerly associated with the Christian Deity. By usurping such traditionally "good" qualities and turning them to ill ends, Milton's Devil disrupts the heretofore exclusive aspects of the binary between Good and Evil, and his blending of these apparent immiscibles is so potent that even the clear attempts of Paradise Lost to uphold a standard, Scriptural reading of its material are rendered ineffectual by the inescapable fact that the most admirable character in the poem, the heroically damned Satan, is also the one who is ostensibly the villain of the work.

A similar challenge to the traditional system of Good and Evil emerges in works treating of the Satanic embodiment. Shakespeare's most disturbing diabolic creation, Iago, departs from both the topical monstrosity of The Tempest's Caliban and the Luciferian Pride of Macbeth in his exclusively linguistic Evil. In simplest terms, Iago is the Divine logos wrenched completely to Evil. He corrupts, wounds, even kills through his ability to pervert language and meaning, thus exhibiting the Satanic embodiment's propensity for altering its essential qualities in defiance of traditional representation. It is Iago's foil Othello, however, who truly represents the full capacity of such demonic iconoclassicism to disintegrate textual standards, for it is the Moorish General, a character whose physically marginal black skin should indict him as an Evil presence, who stands as the play's Deific embodiment. This trope of binary inversion, which elevates Evil through Iago's definitive association with the rational, intellectual qualities of the logos and likewise diminishes Good by corporealizing it in a savage, alien form, sets the stage for the
play's diabolic disruption of the established paradigm. Othello's ultimate inability to
triumph over or even sustain himself against Iago's machinations devalues the traditional
tenets which the play superficially professes to uphold, inverts and confuses the standard
system of representation, and heralds the repetition of this binary-disintegrating Evil on an
even grander scale in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

Rising from the waters of the American Renaissance, Melville's tale of the White
Whale blends Miltonic and Shakespearean devices in its antagonists, Captain Ahab and
Moby Dick. Ahab, who finds his nearest precursors in the Transcendental Satanic
embodiments of Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, resurrects the diabolic
volition and Epic defiance of Milton's Devil, hurling them against the White Whale which,
by displaying the elements of the Divine in the shape of a beast, represents the next level
of the binary inversion first seen in Shakespeare's drama. Like its predecessors, Melville's
novel fails in its attempt to stabilize itself against the disintegrating force of its powerfully
conceived Satanic embodiment, for the splendid spectacle of Ahab's adamant vengeance
survives even his death before the onslaught of the Whale, and the memory of his final,
futile heroism disrupts the strictures of the Medieval tradition which could only conceive
of the diabolic character as a feeble and monstrous foil to the super-ethereal Deity.

In this respect, works such as *Moby Dick*, *Othello*, and *Paradise Lost* make it clear
that the binary inversions which cause their avowed standards to ultimately fold in upon
themselves are the result of a textual response to the protean nature of the Devil, and
thereby enforce the reading that it is this ability to shift, to change, more than any physical
traits, more than even his eternal association with Evil, that is the character's defining
element. As such, it seems only fitting that this discussion of the Devil should draw to a
close with one last illumination of this transformative capacity.

With this in mind, let us return to the Devil as envisioned by Arturo Perez-Reverte.
On the surface, the Satanic young lady of *The Club Dumas* seems to have nothing in
common with its Medieval predecessors and but little with the later representations. Yet
examine the character more closely and certain traits drawn from these earlier versions, both those of the Satanic incarnation and the Satanic embodiment, do make themselves apparent. There is the Medieval quality of isolation, for instance; the girl is "not quite part of the group" (Perez-Reverte 98), and we later discover that, like Cain or Grendel, she is a perpetual wanderer over the face of the Earth. Even her name, Irene Adler, echoes the Scriptural association of the Devil with the Serpent, or adder, and the fact that she is a beautiful woman draws on both Scripture and Medieval folklore, which associated the Devil with Eve or other such sirens.¹ Likewise, she bears qualities of the later representations of the Devil. Her deep sun-tan draws on the darkened body of Milton's Satan, and also like Satan she can poignantly recall "the battle lost, the retreat of the defeated legions" (217) as the swayed angels "followed their leader in rebellion and defeat" (217), while her association throughout the novel with books and studious pursuits calls to mind the Iagian aspect of the Devil as affiliated with the logos of intellect and reason.

In these and other respects, Perez-Reverte's Satanic incarnation bears its debt to those figures which have gone before, but the true value of a character such as Irene Adler rests not in how she relates to her predecessors, but how she departs from them, carrying their penchant for disrupting representational standards to a new level. The Devil of The Club Dumas is human, female, beautiful, intelligent...and Good. This is more than the blending of Deific and Satanic, heroic and evil traits by Milton's Satan, more than the binary inversions of Shakespeare and Melville; this is ultimate feat of iconoclassicism inflicted upon a system which, in some sense, has been disintegrating from the moment it achieved cohesion as a tradition and a standard of representation. And yet, given the

¹ Adler does depart from this tradition in one noteworthy respect: while female Satanic embodiments were not uncommon, a female Satanic incarnation such as Perez-Reverte's character was not, to the extent which my research has unfolded, an image extant during the Middle Ages.
trends examined in the course of this work, Perez-Reverte's "Devil as heroine" cannot fairly be said to be a model that is wholly without precedent.

Milton's Satan drew aspects of the Deific into himself and thereby broke the shackles of the Medieval tradition. *Othello* presented a more intellectually elevated image of Evil and a comparatively lower image of Good, only to be topped by *Moby Dick*'s declaration of heroic Satanic embodiment defying a wholly debased form of the Divine. It is these prior patterns, which merged and inverted the aspects of the representational standard, which paved the path for Irene Adler, a Devil who literalizes the declaration of Milton's Satan, "Evil be thou my Good" (Milton IV:110), not by subverting, but by subsuming the very essence of the Divine *logos* into her character.

Such an incarnation of Satan, which perfectly disintegrates the very foundation of the traditional binary system by transferring Good from the Deific to the Satanic pole and thereby unraveling the very intention for which the Devil was originally created, rests for the moment as the pinnaculal representation of the diabolic appetite for systemic disruption. How long it shall remain so is unknown. As new traditions and standards are raised upon the ashes of the twentieth century, man's understanding of Evil will once again find new definitions, and with those definitions, new forms. That is the nature of the beast: so long as man has a society, Evil will have a shape, and whether it be as a fiery-eyed wanderer of the Medieval fens, a fatally proud Scotsman, a vengeful, crippled sea-captain, or a green-eyed, chestnut-haired girl, the Devil will continue to haunt the shadowy margins of our world; a persistently dark mirror of both man and God, and an eternal reminder that there can never be Light without Darkness.
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