

Abstract

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, William Blake wrote of Milton to be “of the devil’s party without knowing it”. Indeed, even before Romanticism, the anti-hero of *Paradise Lost* was attracting readers for his steadfast rebellious bearing and other traits he shares with Classical epic heroes, as well as for the way he sometimes resembles a Shakespearean tragic hero. Although we cannot really say that Satan is the true hero of *Paradise Lost* – there are critics convincingly arguing against Blake – it is clear that Milton succeeded in portraying him in such a way that the reader cannot help sympathizing with him. According to the Christian tradition, of course, any such attraction to evil is deceptive, but it is still to Milton’s credit that he humanized and complicated the character of the fallen angel.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the way the Satan figure is depicted in the poem so as to appeal to us. Methodologically, I will focus particularly on a close-reading of the poem. First, I shall analyse Satan’s outward description and his actions, suggesting what Satan might have inherited from Classical epic heroes and how he differs from them. Then I will concentrate on his speeches in which he reveals his eloquence and good command of leadership skills. I shall also consider the discrepancy between his public self and his inner world and reflections, keeping in mind our temptation to interpret Satan as a tragic hero. In all of these discussions, the focus will be on the way Satan is depicted to sway the reader’s sympathy in his direction. Finally, I wish to conclude by reflecting on the problem of the poem’s potential inconsistency – precisely the problem that may have been on Blake’s mind as he refused to make Milton “of God's party”.