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Devil at the Door: The Devil in John Milton's Paradise Lost and Mike Carey's Lucifer

Introduction

One of the most enduring icons in the literary tradition is the figure of the Devil. The idea of personifying — or to borrow John Milton's own words, *incarnating* — evil is universally appealing, and as such, the Devil has been immortalized throughout literature as its most popular metaphor. The most popular Devil figure in existence today continues to be the Judeo-Christian image of Satan, the Adversary. This Devil figure's richness can be attributed to the fact that he has roots in three major religions and several ancient systems of belief.

The Devil's significance as a theological and ethical concept has waxed and waned with the times: indeed, many of today's critics state that with the changes that have occurred over the past century, the Devil has been "outmoded". They assert that mankind is quite capable of instigating its own destruction — we no longer need an external force like the Devil to tempt us and motivate us towards perpetuating evil. While it is important to study the Devil in order to study the nature of evil or how the figure of the Devil represents an individual's or a society's idea of what evil is, the Devil himself appears to be missing from the picture.

On the side of literature, contemporary writers have the tendency to downplay — and in some cases, openly satirize — the Devil. The Devil, in fact, appears to be absent in most of

contemporary literature, and his more sinister qualities appear to have been ‘dispersed’ among the many monsters of contemporary fiction. One thing that remains unquestioned about the figure of the Devil, however, is his significance to the field of literary studies, particularly that of semiotics and narratology. We may be correct in saying that the real reason why it is impossible for us to completely do away with the idea of the Devil is because before he became the personification of evil, the Devil was, first and foremost, a character in a story. He is the oldest antagonist in human history, and a part of a long narrative tradition that Neil Forsyth, author of The Old Enemy and The Satanic Epic, aptly calls ‘the combat myth’: the universal idea of a cosmic battle between good and evil whose outcome will determine the fate of mankind.

The iconography of the Devil underwent several changes throughout history in order to suit the needs of the tradition. Ancient writers had the tendency to portray the Devil as a one-dimensional figure: bestial and frightening, with no real motivation beyond being evil for the sake of itself. As time went on, however, writers and artists began to consciously ‘humanize’ the character of the Devil through introspections into his nature, his position in the cosmos, and his sentiments towards Heaven, Hell and the denizens of Earth. The names and the descriptions vary, but remains common to all portrayals is the idea of a fallen angel who has suffered because of his decision to openly defy his Creator.

One of the most notable Devil figures in Western tradition can be found in John Milton’s epic poem, Paradise Lost. By employing the use of powerful imagery, moving poetic language and psychological realism, Milton “put the diabolical in the human psyche” and succeeded in producing “the most impressive, credible, seductive, and memorable portrait of the Devil in the Christian tradition” (Stanford 200). Most Milton scholars agree that the Satan of Paradise Lost was an allegory for the transforming power of evil, and was meant to serve as a warning to the

religious. However, Forsyth argues that the real purpose of Milton was to present us with a Satan who was “initially the Enemy, he who opposes and rebels against the divine decree” and ends up choosing evil later just to differentiate himself from God (Forsyth 27). Milton’s Satan, for Forsyth, is an antagonist in the true Aristotelian sense first: the evil is a label that comes afterward, and is secondary to the idea of a character taking a particular position in order to do actions that will move the plot forward.

Interestingly, Milton’s Satan has found itself a companion in Mike Carey’s Lucifer Morningstar, the main character of the comic series Lucifer. By mixing old archetypes with contemporary sensibilities, Carey’s Lucifer is the Devil in Armani, a stylish and witty anti-hero who takes his position as a rebel against the divine order up to a whole new level by engaging in the creation of his own realm outside of God’s universe. His human appearance, coupled with his sinister sophistication, paint a very different picture of the Devil from what we are most familiar with. Readers often view Carey’s Lucifer as a more modern portrayal of the Devil, something that has combined the Judeo-Christian ideas of Satan since time immemorial and recreated them in a contemporary perspective. Furthermore, Carey’s Lucifer is the *protagonist* of his own story, a character acting in a narrative against an omnipotent antagonist. Like Milton’s Satan, Carey’s Lucifer follows his own will first, and chooses the evil for the sake of differentiation from God, his Father.

This project wishes to accomplish three things:

1. To look into the origins of the Devil figure in the Judeo-Christian tradition and concisely detail the Devil’s existence as a history of ideas regarding good and evil.

2. To make an analysis of the portrayal of the Devil in both Paradise Lost and Lucifer within a narratological framework, and consequently illustrate the similarities and differences between both texts.
3. To study Milton's and Carey's effectiveness in establishing the Devil as a character in a narrative by analyzing the mediums that they used to tell their stories — the epic poem on the part of Milton, and the comic on the part of Carey.

An Ideology of the Devil

“Although we are incapable of discovering what the Devil is as a thing in itself, we are capable of establishing with complete certainty what the Devil is as a human concept, because we have created him.... The Devil is the tradition of what he has been thought to be.”

- Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), 16th Century Philosopher

Satan, Adversary, Lucifer, Mephistopheles, Prince of Darkness — these names are just five of the many that writers of the past centuries have given to an eternally changing figure known as the Devil. Whereas the Judeo-Christian God is the almighty Creator of the universe, the Devil traditionally serves as his quarrelsome and imperfect shadow, rebelling against God by undermining His creation. Although it is impossible to prove whether the Devil is real or not, one can be certain of the Devil's existence as a theoretical concept (Russell 156). Humanity's images of the Devil have shifted throughout the years, and have become the subject of constant revisions and tailoring in order to fulfill a variety of purposes. One thing, however, has remained unchanged: the Devil has always served as a name and face for the abstract nature of evil.

The idea of evil is the largest challenge presented in all religious and philosophical dialogue, but it is exceptionally difficult to quantify it in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Judaism and Christianity believe in a single God, an all-powerful and all-knowing force of good that created the universe. *Because* God is understood to be inherently good, believers are told, all that he creates *must* be good because *God* is good. In this light, however, how can one justify the existence of evil in God's plan? It would not do to say that he created evil because that would put His morality into question. Hence, the figure of the Devil was born: to serve as God's cosmic rival, the one who thwarts or disrupts God's plans. The Jewish people, according to Peter Sanford, tried to understand why they were suffering in spite of the fact that they were God's "chosen people", and hit upon the wiles and temptations of Satan as the reason (8).

Jewish history is one of tribal conflict, with people of the same race waging war and committing atrocities of great magnitude upon each other. In her book *The Origin of Satan*, Elaine Pagels describes how this background of tribal conflict was integral in the development of the Judeo-Christian Devil. She discusses how early Jewish thinkers used the metaphor of cosmic battle in order to interpret human relationships: the Jewish people, both individually and collectively, characterized themselves as embodiments of transcendent forces. This, in turn, allowed them to vindicate themselves while vilifying — or shall we say, *demonizing* — their enemies (15). Hence, the Jewish people saw themselves as "the people of God" and those who stood against them as "agents of Satan". Furthermore, because Satan had once been a part of God's host, it became easy for them to justify how they could come in conflict with their own race. If God's own angel could betray Him, then it only followed that one's own friends could betray their people.

From these discussions, we note two very important means through which to understand the Devil figure's function. On the one hand, the Devil is the Eternal Scapegoat through which one can explain the existence of evil and suffering. On the other hand, the Devil is the Intimate Enemy, a dangerous figure who rebelled against God and works to spite Him by inflicting evil and suffering upon Creation. Combining these ideas in different ways has produced a variety of different Devil figures throughout history.

From Monster to Man: A Brief Study of the Evolution of the Devil Figure

Early literature, most notably Pre-Christian literature, depicts the Devil as a monstrous, purely malignant creature that seems to exist for the sole purpose of opposing God. This is reflective of two pairs of binary oppositions that exist in the worldview of many peoples: human/nonhuman and we/they. The two are often correlated such that "we" equals "human" and "they" equals "not human". Of course the practice of calling one's own people human and "dehumanizing" others does not mean that people actually doubt or deny the humanness of others — the labeling is just a means of defining and consolidating one's own group identity. In the case of Judaism, the use of Satan to represent the enemy interpreted conflict in a specific kind of moral and religious light, in which "we" was equated to God's people and "they" represented God's enemies, and therefore the enemies of God's people as well (Pagels xviii-xix). "Consider Satan," Pagels says, "as a reflection of how we perceive ourselves and those we call 'others'. Satan has... made a kind of profession out of being the 'other'. ...Satan defines negatively what we think of as human" (xviii). We also recall our previous point about how demonizing one's enemies made it easier for people to fight. In this light, demonizing the Devil would seem like the natural thing to do.

Christian philosophers in the Medieval Ages perpetuated the portrayal of the Devil as a monster, although for other reasons. Medieval Christian philosophy puts a great deal of emphasis upon the transforming and corrupting power of evil — doing evil tarnishes the soul, and the corruption of the soul leads to the inevitable corruption of the body. As such, one can literally become a monster if one commits evil acts constantly. As Satan is the embodiment of evil, it was necessary to portray him as a monster in order to emphasize his fallen state. Because he rebelled against God and works against God's plan, Satan is a fearsome and ugly creature deformed by the blackness of his deeds.

Unsurprisingly, the shift from portraying the figure of the Devil as a monster to portraying the figure of the Devil as a human being occurred in tandem with the Reformation. The splintering of the Catholic Church seems to reflect, in some ways, the same sort of agony that the Jewish tribes felt as they warred against each other, but the fact that Protestants still believed in the same God and even practiced the same religious customs made it difficult for their Catholic brethren to view them as monsters. Furthermore, the Church itself was responsible of committing unspeakable atrocities upon so-called "heretics", yet they wore very human faces. The Reformation, then, seemed to espouse a new understanding of evil: that it was subtler, deceptive, and infinitely more dangerous because it resided in the familiar. Protestant writers, in tune with this new theme, refrained from describing the figure of the Devil as a monster, and focused instead upon describing the Devil as the Prince of Lies, capable of changing his form in order to better deceive the children of God.

Protestant thinking also questioned the exact nature of the Devil figure's relationship with God. Early Christian thinkers readily ascribed to the pre-modern understanding of Satan and God as rivals in near equal standing to each other, but Protestant philosophy — particularly Lutheran

thought — took the idea of God’s omnipotence very seriously. According to Luther, God is absolutely free to make Creation as he chooses, and Creation is completely under his control. With this in mind, Luther views evil — and by extension, the Devil — as a part of God’s plan. God, then, “hides under the mask of the Devil”: and his will is present in everything, and his presence is what turns all evil to “ultimate good” (Russell 37). This reduction of the Devil figure is reflected in the literature of the time, which consistently relegated the Devil to a secondary role in both religious discourses and fictional works.

The fate of the Devil figure was later sealed with the rise of Rationalism and the Industrial Revolution. The newfound emphasis on science and scientific thought caused people to study the Devil under a more critical light, and more people began to doubt his existence. Belief in the Devil soon became unfashionable, and even the Church refrained from referring to the Devil as much as possible. While it was generally easy for the majority to dismiss the Devil’s existence, however, it was harder to stop using the Devil as a metaphor for evil. As such, the Devil became an iconographic figure in literature and art. For some, the Devil continued to play his traditional role as Satan, the Adversary — for others, the Devil was a figure of irony or satire to mock Christianity or parody human folly. Some used the Devil as a symbol for human evil and corruption; others chose to appropriate him for their own purposes, championing the Devil as a symbol of rebellion against corrupt authority (Russell 156). What remained consistent in all of these portrayals are the authors’ attempts at humanizing the Devil — a necessary move, given the fact that the Devil was now a fictional character and every character needs a plausible motive. Attempting to show evil not in the monstrous but in the familiar also seemed like a more logical way of describing the nature of evil, and this reflected upon how the Devil was portrayed.

By tracing the evolution of the figure of the Devil, we now have a more intimate understanding of the Devil figure's identity as a personification of evil, and his importance in religious and philosophical thought. Something of equal importance, however, is the Devil figure's identity as a character in a narrative, particularly his role as the single and oldest antagonist in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Figures in a narrative are known as actors, who are defined as agents that perform actions within the narrative: it is through their distinct traits that they transform into characters (Bal 5, 9). Characters can basically be divided into two types in reference to a particular narrative: the protagonist, whose actions drive the plot forward, and the antagonist, who obstructs the protagonist. Both possess particular motivations and traits that define their personalities, and in turn make them memorable to their readers. The Devil, we note, has been consistently portrayed as an antagonist in Judeo-Christian narratives, but in spite of his individual traits he is remembered less as a strong or convincing character and more as a figure whose sole purpose is to serve as a binary opposite — in other words, a *foil* — to God, who is ultimately the protagonist in all Judeo-Christian narratives. In a sense, the Devil has been almost permanently typecast into his role as antagonist, ignoring any potential for character growth: this may be attributed to the fact that Judeo-Christian philosophy places more prevalence on the supremacy of God, and the need in that light for something to represent and explain away evil. This archetypal role of the Devil has made it difficult to make the distinction between the Devil as symbol and the Devil as character. One text, however, seems to have made this attempt: John Milton's Paradise Lost.

A Look at Paradise Lost and the Miltonic Devil

Although there are more than a few notable Devil figures in the Western literary tradition, most critics acknowledge John Milton's Satan as the single most powerful one in the lot. Milton was the first to create a Devil that was a "rounded, credible, at times sympathetic and always seductive figure" (Stanford 194). Something of equal interest to the reader is the function of Milton's Devil. Where other authors perpetuated the conventional use of the Devil as a metaphor for evil, Milton's Satan also appears to have a secondary function: as a portrayal of the self-defeating nature of evil and its adverse effects on any entity that chooses it. Jeffrey Burton Russell's claim, in particular, neatly summarizes popular scholarly thought on Milton's Satan:

Milton... made... Satan powerfully attractive. He intended the reader to be caught up in admiration, to feel the tug of attraction to the terrible, self-indulgent prince of darkness, to feel the pull of that darkness of self turned forever narrowly down into itself instead of opened up courageously to the broad world of light and beauty. He intended us to identify with the Devil and then, as the poem develops, to identify with the gradual revelation of his viciousness and his impotence with the understanding of our own sin and weakness. (Russell 99)

Both the descriptions of Satan in the poem and Satan's own speeches seem to indicate that he possesses "an interior", a "private self" close to humans (Forsyth 7). It is also easy to verify this claim by reading the text of Paradise Lost itself. As Paradise Lost is an epic poem, the narrator figure is understood to possess the authority to regulate the reactions of his readers and to pass judgment upon the characters that he is describing. In Milton's case, a great deal of attention has been ascribed to his technique of playing up Satan in the eyes of his readers then simultaneously undermining him, dispelling the initial impression of heroism through the descriptions of both his physical attributes and his habits (Stanford 195-198). The poem also

stresses the fact that the figure of the Son is the real hero between him and the figure of the Devil. Hence, from “bright angel” as C.S. Lewis describes it, Satan is reduced to a “peeping, prying, lying thing that ends as a frightening snake”, and readers ultimately come to dismiss Milton’s Satan as another symbol among the many for the corrupting power of evil — a powerful and realistic metaphor, but a metaphor nonetheless. What most scholars do not realize, however, is that it is actually impossible to ignore the centrality of Milton’s Satan in Paradise Lost. According to Neil Forsyth, author of The Satanic Epic, Milton’s Satan is a character functioning within a narrative: he is, first and foremost, the Adversary, the antagonist to God. In order to qualify this statement, let us recall that the Judeo-Christian story of God and the Devil is a combat myth: it is a cosmic battle between two opposing forces, and it is meant to determine the fate of mankind. The Judeo-Christian combat myth, however, differs on account of God’s believed superiority to the Devil in all aspects. Believers unanimously accept the fact that the Devil’s temptation of Adam and Eve was the reason for mankind’s fall, but what is remarkable about the Miltonic variant of the creation and combat myth is that it shows how Satan was *necessary* for mankind’s Redemption just as much as he was responsible for mankind’s Fall:

...The next and crucial step towards the Redemption, the Son’s offer to sacrifice himself, indeed follows logically from the way God and Son describe the situation. Satan fell first. Mankind fell because [they were] tempted by him. To save mankind from damnation, another higher power must step in and save them. Satan’s temptation of mankind is a necessary prerequisite to the Son’s reciprocal intervention in the fate of mankind. Without Satan, no Son. ...Thus... it is Satan’s presence that both causes and excuses the fall of mankind, and his role is to allow

God to forgive Adam and Eve. Like his great opponent in the poem, the Son, he is, in an important sense, sacrificed for the good of mankind. (Forsyth 17)

In this sense, we encounter two important dialectics within the poem: the dialectic between God and Satan (creator and created), and Satan and the Son (direct binary opposites). Neither is capable of existing without the other, and it is curious to note that the identities of these pairs, particularly that of the Devil and God, are morally interchangeable. The problem of Satan (and, by extension, the problem of God) then becomes a personal one, as Milton's God is the Lutheran God, one whose goodness is still present in the blackest evil. Satan appears to have been pitted against an opponent who simply cannot be defeated, but he chooses to try nonetheless. He has defined himself in rebellion, as the Adversary, the one who opposes omnipotence: to give up the fight, even if he wanted to, would be to defy the new identity that he forged for himself (Forsyth 157).

Reading Paradise Lost in this fashion shows how Milton was 'truly Aristotlean' in the construction of his characters: they are subordinate to the plot, and function in a particular way that allows the plot to remain in motion (Forsyth 26). Furthermore, in the Classical understanding of plot and character, ideas like 'good' and 'evil' are subordinate to the protagonist-antagonist dialectic: ascribing a moral slant to the actions of the characters should ideally come afterward. Milton's Satan, Forsyth stresses, was declared the Adversary by the camp of God, and upon realizing this, merely acted accordingly. "Even in *Paradise Lost*," he says, "Satan is initially the Enemy, he who opposes and rebels against the divine decree: he chooses evil just to be different" (26). Satan has been declared the opposite and opponent of God, and in his choices he signals not a difference of essence so much as of structure and direction from evil towards good, and therefore from good towards evil (Forsyth 26-27).

The Satan in Paradise Lost, in this light, seems to become less of a monstrous, arrogant and self-defeating persona of evil as much as a character who is simply reacting to the motivations within the plot and forging his own self-identity. He is the antagonist to a protagonist with almighty power, and while he predictably loses it is important to see the so-called ‘real reasons’ why he loses without attributing it to a fundamental inferiority centered within an idea of good versus evil. Seeing both how Milton’s Satan is similar and different to human beings is central in understanding the text.

John Milton’s portrayal of the Devil in Paradise Lost was very powerful, and the fact that some scholars consider it the *most* powerful is not surprising. It is important to note, however, that while Milton may have succeeded in identifying the Devil as a character in a narrative, he was unable to completely differentiate the figure of the Devil from the idea of evil. A complete separation would have fully acknowledged Satan as a genuine literary figure and enabled a smoother transition from the Devil as the standard archetype for evil to the Devil as a character. We can identify two problems central to this argument: the medium in which Paradise Lost was written, and John Milton’s intentions as the author.

Critics regard John Milton’s Paradise Lost as the last great epic poem in the Western literary tradition, and much of the power behind Milton’s Satan lies in the strength of his poetry. It may even be possible to say that if Paradise Lost had been written in another medium, Milton’s Satan might not have been half as convincing as he is at present. Forsyth’s study, however, is one among the many critics who have acknowledged the many ‘voices’ and ambiguities within Paradise Lost, stressing how difficult it is to pin any particular approach of the poem as the so-called correct reading. Where it was the ‘narrative interference’ of Milton that enabled the creation of the most powerful representation of the Devil in the Western canon, it is that same

interference that makes it difficult for scholars to discern how Satan must be interpreted within the lens of Milton's work. Forsyth on the one hand insists that Paradise Lost must not be read as the traditional epic poem but as a Satanic epic with Satan functioning as the central character of the narrative, but other scholars see no other means through which to analyze the work. Both sides of the argument continue to use the text as evidence, and since the text itself is ambiguous, so is the clarity of results.

We now turn our attention to John Milton himself as the author of Paradise Lost. It is well known fact that Milton went through his own crises of faith, and was an avid reader of both philosophical and religious texts, most especially the texts of the heresies that were abound in Europe during his lifetime: many of this material were employed in Paradise Lost, and the effect is the acknowledgment of the power of the Devil and a strong sense of sympathy for his character (Forsyth 50). We also note that he was alive during the 16th Century, which was a time of great political and religious flux for England, with notable events being the English civil wars and the Reformation of the Church — this socio-political backdrop may have aggravated his own personal crises, and driven him to write Paradise Lost in the fashion that we see it today.

The Miltonic Devil functioned as a sort of reflection of Milton himself, questioning and provoking the Church with regard to some of her most crucial theologies (Forsyth 47). Regardless of this, however, Milton's take on God and the Devil were heavily influenced by the teachings of Luther, and as such, the poem he wrote was still more of a theological study than it was a fictional work. He acknowledged the Devil and he could sympathize with the Devil, but at the end of it all, the Devil was *still* evil, and it was important for Milton to portray him that way. Hence, even though the Satan is an important character within Paradise Lost, he still *cannot* exist in separation from the equally important figures of God the Father and the Son. God the Father is

the primary motivator of the plot: the Miltonic Devil, while powerful and memorable in the eyes of his readers, is simply reacting. Narratologically speaking, in conclusion, we could say that Satan remains *secondary* in terms of plot and character.

Re-Awakening the Devil: Mike Carey's *Lucifer*

“...Yet Satan is not the principle of malignity, or of the abstract love of evil — but of the abstract love of power, of pride, of self-will personified, to which last principle all other good and evil, and even his own, are subordinate. From this principle he never flinches. ...His thoughts burn like a hell within him; but the power of thought holds dominion in his mind over every other consideration.”

-William Hazlit, Romantic Poet

We previously discussed the evolution of the Devil figure, stating how the Devil has been consistently represented primarily as a symbol for evil and secondarily as the oldest antagonist in Judeo-Christian narratives. John Milton's Paradise Lost was the first attempt to reverse the order, with the Devil figure being forwarded as a character in a narrative with his own traits and motivations separate from the figure of God. Paradise Lost, however, still relegated the Devil to a secondary role in the plot, and the literature afterward followed Milton's structure. Contemporary literature has, we note, “killed” the figure of the Devil in three ways:

- 1.) The portrayal of the Devil is satiric in nature, meant to demean Christian beliefs or the figure of the Devil itself.
- 2.) The portrayal of the Devil does not move beyond the traditional associations of the Judeo-Christian Satan.

3.) The Devil is absent from the narrative, and his traits now manifest itself within monsters and monstrous characters (Russell 237).

The only notable exception to this trend is Mike Carey, who appears to have resurrected the Devil in literature and moved beyond portraying the Devil figure in his traditional role as a personification for evil and an antagonist to God.

Lucifer is a 75-issue comic series centered on Lucifer Morningstar, a character based off the Judeo-Christian Devil. Lucifer actually made his first appearance in Sandman, a comic series by Neil Gaiman, as the traditional ruler of Hell. During the course of Sandman, Lucifer decides to abandon both Hell and his position as ruler of Hell: near the beginning of Sandman: A Season of Mists, he has Morpheus, the main character of Sandman, cut off his wings — the source of his power — in order to leave Hell and walk where he pleases as a mortal man. It is at this point that Lucifer, Mike Carey's series, picks up. The first arc, Devil in the Gateway, opens with Lucifer Morningstar performing in Lux, a piano bar he has set up somewhere in the United States of America. He is visited by the angel Amenadiel, who informs him that God has given his fallen son a mission that he cannot refuse. The rest of the comic covers Lucifer's continuing conflict with the Creator as he forges a new Creation in which he would be able to rule supreme. It ends with his decision to leave the Creation of his "Father", as a departure from that universe appears to be the only real way in which he could be free.

Lucifer plays host to characters and concepts from world literature, folklore, mythology and several other religious systems of belief outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Perhaps the most important embedded text within Lucifer, however, is that of Paradise Lost. Whereas John Milton drew his inspiration for the character of Satan from the primary texts of the Judeo-Christian sources and several 'heretical' versions of the combat myth, Mike Carey appears to

have fashioned his Lucifer using both Milton's sources and a rich heritage of American literature regarding the Devil. What is *most* interesting about the character of Lucifer, however, is that he is the main character of his own narrative, with traits and motivations that make him convincing as a literary figure. In Lucifer, the figure of the Devil finally takes center stage: he becomes the *protagonist*, the primary motivator of the plot. His actions may make him an anti-hero by narratological standards, but Carey's decision to use Lucifer as his main character has finally cemented the Devil's identity as a character, successfully differentiating the Devil from his role as an archetype and his portrayal as a so-called second fiddle to the figure of God. In order to verify these statements, let us look at an analysis of the text of Lucifer itself.

Lucifer as Retelling: A Narratological Analysis

"Fate's a slippery sort of concept, though, isn't it? I mean, most of the time it's just an excuse for doing what you want to do anyway."

-Lucifer Morningstar, Lucifer Volume 2: Children & Monsters

A retelling is understood to be a re-imagining of a particular text through a change of focus or perspective, or by providing a prequel or sequel to the original story. Paradise Lost is an example of a very intentional retelling, created through Milton's appropriation of several primary texts and an injection of his own creativity. Lucifer can also be viewed as a retelling of the Judeo-Christian combat myth, and it shares a few startling similarities with Milton's epic poem.

#	PARADISE LOST	LUCIFER
1	Satan and his followers languish in the depths of Hell, following their battle with the host of God. Satan regains his bearings, speaks to Belial, and then rallies the rest of the fallen host to him.	Lucifer Morningstar is seen in Lux, a piano bar that he runs with the help of Mazikeen, the one demon who was allowed to accompany him after his departure from Hell in Neil Gaiman's <u>Sandman</u> . He is mortal.

2	Satan is elected by the Council of Hell to be the first to ascend into God's new Creation. The task is not without its dangers.	Lucifer is visited by Amenadiel, a throne of the host. He is recruited for a mission that he cannot refuse, and has been told that he will, not may, name his reward. He decides to ask for a letter of passage.
3	Satan declares rebellion against God, and puts himself in place as enemy of all of mankind. He initiates his temptation of Adam and Eve, later causing their fall and, by extension, the fall of mankind.	Lucifer declares his autonomy from God. Instead of leaving the Creation, as the letter of passage would have allowed him to do, he tears the letter in half. It becomes a void, which later plays host to a creation that he makes on his own separate from God's.

Presented above is a table illustrating the very similar fashion in which Lucifer begins by juxtaposing it with some of the early scenes in Paradise Lost. Both texts begin with the Devil at a low but not entirely degraded position in the cosmic order, and both show how they make crucial decisions with regard to their identity in relation to their Creator near the beginning of the narratives. These decisions shape the events that follow afterward, in both cases.

Lucifer may mimic Paradise Lost for the first thirteen issues, but it later develops into a completely different narrative from the epic poem. Nonetheless, several scenes and events in the remaining part of the story echo back to Paradise Lost, and to the primary narratives of the Judeo-Christian religion. Here are some of the most notable ones:

1. In Lucifer #5-8: The House of Windowless Rooms, we have Lucifer descending into the Realms of Pain — the “Hell” of Japanese mythology — in order to take back his wings, which are the source of his angelic power. In one of the final scenes in Part 4, the narrative reads: “Two days he sojourned in the realms of pain. / Two days and two nights. / But on the third day he rose, and in his rising he tore apart the veils of illusion which are distance and time...” This sort of story is disconcertingly familiar to Christians, who have read it before in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

2. During the events in Lucifer #11: Children & Monsters, Lucifer ascends to the Aleph, which is the point through which all other points in the universe can be seen. This almost seems like a throwback to Satan's solitary journey up to God's creation in Paradise Lost.
3. In Lucifer #15: The Ancestral Deed, Lucifer's first step in the creation of his own universe is making a garden similar to the garden of Eden, complete with his own Adam and Eve. Amenadiel disguises himself as self-same snake that Lucifer had chosen in the past, and leads the pair towards their own destruction, in a narrative that parallels the traditional creation myth. This time, however, God and his agents are the antagonists.
4. In Lucifer: Lilith (a side story included in the eighth volume of the series' trade paperbacks), Lucifer — then Samael — has a conversation with the angel Gabriel. Their subject of discussion mirrors that of Satan's confrontation with Michael in Paradise Lost.
5. Several important events take place in Hell, allowing readers of Lucifer a glimpse of how things in Lucifer's former realm work between the demons. Sensitive readers familiar with Paradise Lost will note the same patterns of behavior and the same brand of politics shown by the Council of Hell.
6. There are several scenes involving the host of heaven at war with their many different adversaries throughout the narrative of Lucifer. Some of them come close to displaying the same martial imagery of Milton in his poem.

7. The Son's offer to the Father to sacrifice himself for mankind in Paradise Lost is echoed by Elaine Belloc's offer to sacrifice herself to resurrect Lucifer in the comic series.
8. In the issue Lucifer: The Yahweh Dance, Lucifer plays the part of observer to Elaine Belloc as she acclimatizes herself to her newfound powers as the new God of the Father's Creation. The whole section is an almost satirical take on the process of creation.

It is also important to note the role of the figure of God in Lucifer, with its notable similarities and digressions with regard to Paradise Lost. In Lucifer #38-39: Naglfar, God appears and speaks at length for the first time in the narrative. He addresses Lucifer and the archangel Michael — his twin “Sons” by Carey's interpretation — and reasserts his omnipotence by telling both of them that in spite of their actions, they are still acting according to their nature and were therefore still imprisoned within God's plan. Their existence, then, was solely gratuitous, much like their human brethren. God's monologue in Lucifer indicates that Carey's God figure is still that of the Lutheran God. From the beginning of the series until his departure near the end, this God anticipated everything that his ‘begotten son’ Lucifer set out to do. Following this revelation in the series, Carey's Devil proceeds to react *as protagonist* against what the *primary antagonist* — God the Father — has done. As in the case of Satan in Paradise Lost, giving up would be defying his self-identity. *Unlike* the Miltonic Devil, however, Carey's Devil has a slightly different and more personal motive, in that he reacts because the actions of God the Father affect him and the Creation he established. If God the Father's actions did not have any consequences towards his person or what he deems as his own, Carey's Lucifer would

have been content to take no action. We will deal with Lucifer and the idea of the principle of will and self in a later part of the paper.

Although we have established that the similarities Lucifer shares with Paradise Lost, in order to understand why Lucifer is more effective in forwarding the Devil as character, one must look at way Lucifer diverges from Paradise Lost and from the traditional Judeo-Christian combat myths. The first important difference is their difference in medium.

Comics & Sequential Art: A Question of Medium

We have previously mentioned the difficulties that scholars face in analyzing John Milton's Paradise Lost, along with how the narrative interference present within the text leaves certain ambiguities that remain at the center of scholarly debate. On the other end of the spectrum, Mike Carey's Lucifer does not appear to be burdened with this difficulty. The fabula of Lucifer has been interpreted through the comic book, a medium that is not entirely accepted as a 'genuine' form of literature by scholars but is widely accepted by pop culture, and is perhaps the most widespread and well-read form of print media in the global community today. Strangely, it is the *visual* element of Lucifer — the very component that makes most literary critics question its identity as a text — that allows Mike Carey's vision of the Devil to be so convincing to his readers.

To answer the question of effectiveness in communicating the figure of the Devil, it may not be too ludicrous to say that Lucifer is more effective. Although there is a textual narrator present, much more of the story is told through the dialogue of the characters and what the reader himself *sees* in the comic. Since the art of Lucifer is drawn in a rather realistic fashion, it would be safe to say that what a reader of the series sees is exactly what a reader is meant to get. The

narrative interference in Paradise Lost manifests itself through words with double meanings, ambiguous phrases and the unique way in which the poem is written (which leads many scholars into debate with regard as to how to analyze the work), the narrative interference in Lucifer is kept at a minimum, if not completely absent.

On another note, there is the popular culture element to Lucifer that one must consider. Given the fact that the general majority prefers more visual media over the traditional texts, Lucifer's medium as a comic automatically merits a larger reader base than what it might have gotten as a novel, or as a more 'textual' medium. Furthermore, the comics of the 21st Century have evolved into a more serious and therefore very different genre from its origins, meriting more attention and critical acclaim from the academic world.

Part of the Devil's power as an archetype is defined by those who read him and adhere to the symbolism behind his character. With this in mind, one could say that Carey's decision to write Lucifer as a comic, blending powerful imagery with equally powerful words, enables him to reach out to a more general audience, the very audience that decides upon which lens to use in interpreting the idea of the Devil and of evil. *Because* Carey structured the character of Lucifer Morningstar as a protagonist, his readers find themselves encountered with an entirely new version of a devil that they are supposed to be intimately familiar with. Hence, the visual element of the comic becomes indispensable to the presentation of Lucifer as a whole — a narrative account communicated solely through text would rely too much on the propensity of words. The usage, meaning and interpretation of words differ subtly but significantly on an individual basis: these differences might end up detracting from the force of the re-imagining. Visual images provide a much more immediate effect, and have less difficulty in invoking emotion or provoking a reaction from the reader.

Now that the importance of the medium has been established, we may look towards how successful Carey was in structuring the Devil as a protagonist by analyzing the text and imagery of the comic, and by juxtaposing Carey's Lucifer against Milton's Satan.

The Disobedient Son: Mike Carey's Lucifer

The most crucial difference one must note between Milton's Satan and Carey's Lucifer is that where the Satan of Paradise Lost is nothing more but a rebellious angel, Carey's Lucifer is positioned as "a Son of Yahweh": he and his brother, the archangel Michael, take the place of the figure of Jesus Christ, who is traditionally understood to be the Son of God. Carey achieved this by making some modifications to the Judeo-Christian creation and combat myths. First, the creation myth was modified to show how God first created Michael and Lucifer, and *then* created the universe using them as tools (Lucifer, Issues 25-26 & 75). Second, Lucifer's rebellion was sparked not by jealousy over Adam and Eve, but because of his conversations with Lilith about autonomy and his desire to break away from the Father — he then waited for the opportunity to declare rebellion, which presented itself in the crisis of the Lilim (Lucifer, Lilith). Finally, there is a deliberate absence of the figure of Jesus Christ as a character in Lucifer: the figure of God himself calls Lucifer and Michael his sons. Carey even goes so far as to create new "trinities": the first is between God the Father, Lucifer and Michael, the first of his creations. The second is between Lucifer, Michael and Elaine Belloc, Michael's daughter.

Positioning Lucifer in this fashion emphasizes his status as part of the Divine Family, and while it may not make him equal to God the Father in power, it does make him appear to be more of a direct binary opposite to God than Satan was in Paradise Lost, since the figure of the Son has been replaced by Lucifer. The comic of Lucifer then involves itself in a very different

direction from the traditional iconography of the Devil — where most texts depict a descent or stagnation, Carey's Lucifer depicts a constant ascent in the Devil figure's stature.

We have described how the iconography of the Devil has been a transition from the Devil as monster to the Devil as 'human'. In Lucifer, Carey provides the next natural step in the process: the portrayal of the Devil as angel, god or an otherwise elevated figure. The visual portrayal of his character in the comic book shifted in order to match the change. Where in the first forty issues, Lucifer was a blonde, blue-eyed human man, the later issues show the deepening gold in his hair, the change of his eyes to gold, the re-instatement of his wings and the return — and increase — in his power as the Lightbringer. Paradise Lost details the 'downfall' and reduction of Satan; Lucifer's textual and visual narrative tracks Lucifer's revival as an angel, and then watches as he catapults himself into godhood. Lucifer does have more than a few steep downfalls, but they are underscored by even steeper ascensions. Lucifer, in some ways, is even rewarded for never flinching from his principles: he survives in the end, and ultimately manages to leave Creation. He is even given the chance to speak at length with God once again in the final issue of the comic: his father appears to acknowledge Lucifer's growth, and asks if they may share experiences. Lucifer rejects him, thus reasserting his personal autonomy.

Beyond his positioning as the protagonist and binary opposite to the antagonist in God the Father, Carey's Lucifer seems to be a more "mature" character over Milton's Satan. While they are both embodiments of pride, structuring their actions around their love of self, Lucifer does not display the same moments of self-doubt as Satan does: he is also more fully aware of God's omnipotence, and both remarks upon his father's nature and structures his actions within this consideration. Of course, while his rebellion is what defines him, Lucifer stresses that he acts primarily to please himself rather than to differentiate himself from the father. Furthermore, all

of Lucifer's actions are centered around furthering himself, or protecting himself and what he considers his own — what happens to any other party is of little concern to him. Overall, the evil of Lucifer's character is unquestionable by moral standards, but it is ultimately secondary to his principle of self and willpower. "Lucifer's quest for autonomy," Carey himself says, "is his driving motivation and the very definition of his nature"

(<http://www.sfsite.com/10b/mc186.htm>). He was created, in the words of God the Father in the comic, to embody the strength of will. Satan, on the other hand, does not succeed in differentiating himself from his creator: he remains entangled in God's plan, and his lack of confidence is what ultimately destroys his character.

Because Lucifer is the protagonist, he is thus 'redeemed' for achieving the principle of self: there are times when his actions have dire consequences, but overall everything comes full circle in the narrative. Satan was not given this liberty, as Milton intended Paradise Lost to be instructional with regard to the nature of evil. Whereas Satan is incapable of changing himself mostly because of the circumstances, however, Lucifer is incapable of change as a matter of principle, for changing would be denying his essential nature (Carey, <http://www.sfsite.com/10b/mc186.htm>). Lucifer, then, is not necessarily made better by his experiences, but he is certainly not degraded, nor is he a figure to be pitied or reviled.

Another important difference to note is the fact that Lucifer is forwarded *primarily* as a work of fiction. Carey's blending of many other religious texts and liberal use of world folklore emphasize this fact, as the presence of other god figures and the reduction, the absence or complete remaking of particularly important Christian symbols undermines the Judeo-Christian slate of the comic. Furthermore, Lucifer is not about the human concern for salvation, but the human dialectic of freedom and control within the structure of the family. A cosmic battle does

take place (and inevitably so, given the characters), but the real focus of the comic is the relationship between a father and his quarrelsome offspring. To quote:

When we're kids, we let our parents control and define us in a lot of important ways — but then we all reach the point where that doesn't work any more. And typically, the child realizes that this point has been reached quite a long time before the parent does. ... We want to be the authors of our own lives and our own nature: we want to have created and shaped ourselves, and when we rebel against our parents we're rebelling against the part of us that's always going to bear their imprint. But we can no more cut out that part than we can cut off our own head and still function. (<http://www.sfsite.com/10b/mc186.htm>)

Portraying the figure of the Devil in this light lends a peculiar element to Lucifer that would not have been made possible if the Devil figure therein remained the traditional Judeo-Christian Adversary, antagonizing God simply because he is evil. We see, for the first time in literary history, that the Devil has finally been properly treated as a literary character with his own unique personality, memorable traits and convincing goals and motives for his actions.

Conclusion

The figure of the Devil has made the transition from the theological entity to literary character over the past centuries, and although his metaphysical existence can never be proven or disproved with certainty, his importance as a concept remains unquestioned. He, like any symbol, is meant to change with the times in order to suit particular human needs, or represent particular ideas. Readers, we note, have always viewed the Devil as a personification of evil: he does evil, commits evil acts, and is evil in itself. Given his origins in religious tradition, this is

not entirely surprising. Post-modernity and the rampant urbanization of the 21st Century, however, have caused the figure of the Devil to decline in prominence. The world at present is understood to be complex, contradictory and riddled with ambiguities. In this light, the “simplicity” of the Devil — that is, someone who is totally and purely evil — seems base and immature. He was something that could only stay within the realm of fiction, and even that made him seem like an unwieldy character because of his supposedly one-sided nature.

Mike Carey has successfully resurrected the idea of the Devil by pointing out that even a figure like the Devil is, first and foremost, a character in a narrative — there are times when our own personal biases and beliefs affect the way we understand him, and may lead us to premature judgments on his motives and on his nature. Carey is unique in his portrayal of the Devil as a protagonist, and by doing so he has given the character of the Devil a newfound depth and complexity. His Lucifer Morningstar could not possibly care what befalls humanity, or how best to turn human beings away from God: his only concern is himself, and his ultimate goal is to establish his independence from his father. Human beings are entirely free to occupy themselves in his opinion, and what they do with their time does not matter to him. His motivations, then, are self-driven, and not entirely dependent upon the figure of God. Furthermore, Lucifer Morningstar is dynamic: although there are particular and significant aspects of his character that do not change, his character does not emerge from the narrative of Lucifer without learning or gaining anything new.

John Milton may have been the first to take the step towards differentiating the idea of the Devil from the idea of evil, but it was Mike Carey who successfully made the transition. The arrival of his Lucifer Morningstar has signaled a rather impressive reemergence of the literary Devil to both readers and critics alike, and it is quite fitting for the Devil to return to the attention

of the academic community in a medium that is wider spread and better read by the majority. Carey and his work have forwarded the idea of the Devil as a “floating signifier”: a symbol free from its traditional meanings, and different in its current representation from its original origin. Once a symbol or metaphor has become a floating signifier, it is capable of evolving further into something more universal and ultimately longer lasting in literature: it also indicates a change in human thought, and change is always worth studying. A floating signifier has the freedom to change its meaning to properly reflect the sentiments of the times, and even a symbol as culturally complex as the Devil can be and *deserves* to be treated in this fashion.

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Critical Response, Post-Senior Lit Conference

We have been required to respond to a few of the comments and suggestions that were forwarded by our reactors, so I have chosen a few that I wish to answer in this section.

Firstly, a few points were raised about the lack of discourse on Mike Carey, his work Lucifer, and the comic as a medium. I would like to acknowledge this as one of the main failings of this paper. For one thing, there is a notable lack of critical sources studying the comic: the few that were available to me tackled subjects outside of the focus on my paper. Furthermore, to my knowledge there are no critical sources on Mike Carey, much less on Lucifer — one of the authors of the web pages I used in this paper is in the process of writing a guide to Lucifer, but the state of that book's production is unknown to me at the moment. Much of what I had on Mike Carey and on Lucifer were a result of personal research and observation, and I hope to expand the direction of this study as more sources become available. On another note, it has been pointed out that it may be interesting to discuss the historical and cultural factors that created the figure of Lucifer, and I agree. Sources, however, are again the problem: American folklore on the Devil is difficult to come by, and would require more time.

To add to this point, I would like to note that I had originally planned to have a section devoted to the historical and cultural influences that created the Miltonic Devil and Carey's Lucifer — resources on Milton, for one, are particularly expansive in that direction, and it was possible to look into books studying the evolution of the Devil figure in order to write about the figure as it stood in contemporary times. I also wished to point out the similarities in socio-historical situation that one could find when comparing John Milton and Mike Carey. I was requested, however, to construct my paper instead as a history of ideas, as it was a more

appropriate means through which to discuss my topic in, since I had established that it was a study of the figure of the Devil as character and how effective these two authors were in their respective portrayals.

Secondly, Ma'am Alona Guevarra raised an interesting point about the relationship between the figure of the Devil and the Freudian concept of the Id, or the "pleasure principle" — one way to understand the figure Devil, after all, is by relating it to the darker, more instinctual face of the human personality. I am uncertain as to whether I would be able to do an effective psychoanalytic study on the Miltonic Devil and Lucifer, but perhaps I can relate this idea to the fact that Carey forwarded his Devil as 'an embodiment of willpower', and also emphasized through the comic how every action the Devil made was directed towards forwarding himself or protecting himself and what he owned. His moral standards of good and evil, then, were primarily centered on this need for gratification: everything else was secondary. For example, Lucifer in the comic is described to consider it a point of pride that he never breaks his promises — this is usually interpreted as a desirable trait, but when we look at it in the light of the Devil being an embodiment of willpower and the principle of self, it takes on a wholly different meaning that may not necessarily be good by our standards, but neither is it evil.

Thirdly, Sir Vincenz Serrano — my mentor, and one of my two reactors — pointed out that my narratological framework was not as clear, and that I was unable to go well into the genre of the comic vis-à-vis the epic poem. On the first point, my narratological framework helped me insofar as establishing Lucifer as a reimagining-retelling of the typical combat myth (and by extension, of Paradise Lost), and in clarifying the position of the figure of Satan in the narrative. The rest of the analysis, however, was accomplished through personal research, as due to time constraint I was unable to properly research the narratological framework needed to

analyze character. On the second point, this may be pinned due to the lack of resources on the comic, and the fact that the way in which Milton wrote Paradise Lost was significantly different from the classical form of the epic poem. Milton, for one, wrote an epic poem that was designed to be *read* rather than *performed* — that difference alone is enough to signify that Paradise Lost needs to be judged using a different critical framework, much like how comics must also be judged in a fashion different from how one would normally critique literature. He, like Carey, only mimicked what was already there and borrowed from the norm when it suited them, but otherwise their portrayals of the Devil will wholly unique.

On the topic of comics, there was an interesting viewpoint questioning its importance and popularity as a literary medium. This is something I would like to defend, as it was pointed out that comics are not entirely popular. I regret not having the statistical evidence at hand at the moment, but as someone who has taken some units in comics & sequential arts studies it has been proven that comics are wider read than more “traditional” forms of literature. Furthermore, analysts have acknowledged the importance of comics to popular culture. In Japan, for example, comics are integral to the development of their literature: to this day, a book is not usually considered a proper book if there are no illustrations. They also had their own awards to acknowledge particularly outstanding comics well before America and Europe came up with their own counterparts. We should also note the change in our own country — there must be a reason why cheaper versions of popular comics titles are being made available in book stores. There is also the fact that several comics titles have been awarded for their contributions to literature and their critical outlook on contemporary issues: I can name Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman* (the first and last comic to win a prestigious science fiction & fantasy award, thus meriting the need for that literary scene to create an award to recognize similar achievements in the field of

comics), Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (the first comic to ever win the Pulitzer prize) and Brian K. Vaughan's *Pride of Baghdad* (a work notable for its critical view on the Iraqi war). Comics toe the line between 'popular culture' and 'high culture', and deserve to be acknowledged as a form of literature with its own important contributions to the academe.

In terms of expanding this study, I think the most appropriate way to do so would be to focus either on a socio-historical look at Paradise Lost vis-à-vis Lucifer, or a study properly comparing the genre of the epic poem (most particularly the kind of epic poem that Milton wrote) and the comic. Not much has been done in either direction, and it may be able to more effectively situate the ideas I had in this paper.

If someone was going to ask me what it was like to write this thesis, I would have to say that it was a long, arduous and difficult journey that took all of two years to complete and is still unwilling to let me off the hook. I would also add that I would love to do it again. That said, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Ateneo de Manila English Department, most especially Sir Danilo Francisco Reyes and Sir Vincenz Serrano, for seeing me through the final stretch!