

## C. S. Lewis and Satan: *A Preface to Paradise Lost* and Its Respondents, 1942-1952<sup>1\*</sup>

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Published nearly eight decades ago, C. S. Lewis's *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942) remains arguably the most influential work of Milton criticism ever written. Composed during the height of the mid-twentieth century "Milton Controversy,"<sup>2</sup> during which the very value and quality of Milton's epic was challenged and debated by various "anti-Miltonist" scholars, *A Preface* was influential on many levels, including Lewis's assertion that *Paradise Lost*'s artistic success could best be appreciated by placing it within its proper genre as a "Secondary epic" (Lewis 39; see 39-60)<sup>3</sup> and also his argument that "Milton's version of the Fall story" should not be considered theologically unorthodox but rather conforming "substantially" to the Augustinian tradition and the orthodox "Church as a whole" (65; see 65-71, in which Lewis argues that Milton's account largely coincides with that of Augustine's *City of God*). But unquestionably Lewis's chapter on Milton's Satan (Lewis 92-100) provoked the most substantive and enduring responses in the decade following *A Preface*'s publication. In that brief chapter, Lewis challenged the popular notion that Milton's Satan was the hero of *Paradise Lost*, arguing rather that Satan was not only morally evil but also supremely egotistical, even showing himself in some ways to be foolish and tedious. The critical response to Lewis's assertions came rapidly and continued steadily, shaping and continuing to shape interpretations of *Paradise Lost* to this day, as

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\*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debate/reception-history-of-lewis-preface-to-paradise-lost>.

evidenced by various late twentieth century and twenty-first century books and articles that engage both Lewis and his best-known early respondent, A. J. A. Waldock.<sup>4</sup> My essay will present and analyze Lewis's discussion of Satan and the response it elicited through 1952, focusing specifically on the books and articles during that time period that most directly and thoroughly engage Lewis's chapter.<sup>5</sup> Amid this presentation, I will address what I consider the strengths and shortcomings of Lewis's and his respondents' discussions, even as I highlight common elements in his respondents' critiques.

### Lewis's Challenge to the Romantics' Heroic Satan

To understand the significance of Lewis's analysis of Satan, we must recognize that in *A Preface*, Lewis writes against a long tradition, begun with the Romantics William Blake, and more importantly Percy Bysshe Shelley, that contends that Milton unconsciously favored Satan—Blake famously wrote that Milton “was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it” (Blake 35)—and that Satan was the true hero of *Paradise Lost*. This Romantic notion of Satan's heroism goes beyond John Dryden's notion that Satan is the epic's hero because he defeats Adam,<sup>6</sup> or even the idea that Satan is heroic in the sense that he drives the action of the poem and is the most dynamic character in the epic, but actually argues that Satan is morally superior to Milton's God the Father, whose immoral actions toward Satan provoke and even justify his rebellion.

In articulating this position regarding Satan, Shelley in his *Defence of Poetry* writes:

Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy. (290)

In Shelley's view, Satan's heroism is grounded in the grandeur of his noble, indefatigable rebellion against an immoral and sadistic Tyrant

who, despite his cruel torture and inevitable victory against Satan, cannot quell the preserving spirit of his victimized foe. Although Shelley elsewhere admits his own misgivings regarding Satan's moral character, he nonetheless asserts that Satan's moral failings are "excuse[d]" because the "wrongs" done to him by Milton's God "exceed all measure" (Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, 121).

In *A Preface*, Lewis portrays himself as working to reverse longstanding wrong thinking brought about by Romanticism's celebration of Satan. In his Dedication, Lewis directly addresses his friend Charles Williams, calling Williams's 1940 Introduction to *The World's Classics' The English Poems of John Milton* "the recovery of a true critical tradition after more than a hundred years of laborious misunderstanding" (Lewis v). Lewis was deeply impressed by Williams's contention that Milton depicts Satan as "malicious and idiotic" (Williams xiii), a character whose pompous "self-love" reveals the "ironical" nature of his words (xii). According to Williams, Satan's bombastic speeches are inaccurate in the way that "Hell is always inaccurate," and they rightly elicit the "irrepressible laughter of heaven" at Satan's "solemn antics." Indeed, Milton's Father's mirth in the face of Satan's absurdity depicts how "Love laughs at anti-love" (xii-xiii).

In his chapter on Satan, Lewis frames his discussion in a manner that recognizes the artistic greatness of Milton's depiction even as he challenges the idea that Milton admired Satan or that Satan should be approved of by Milton's audience. Lewis asserts, on the one hand, that "Milton's Satan is a magnificent character" in the sense that "Milton's presentation of him is a magnificent poetical achievement which engages the attention and excites the admiration of the reader" (Lewis 92). On the other hand, Lewis challenges the idea that Milton's Satan "ought to be an object of admiration and sympathy, conscious or unconscious, on the part of the poet or his readers or both" (92). Lewis's aim here is not "directly to convert those who admire Satan, but only to make a little clearer what it is they are admiring. That Milton could not have shared their admiration will then, I hope, need no argument" (92). In these sentences, Lewis clearly distinguishes be-

tween admiring the sublime artistic achievement that is Milton's Satan, and admiring Satan himself. In doing so, Lewis affirms against the "anti-Miltonists" *Paradise Lost's* poetic greatness even as he challenges the morality of romanticizing Satan.

Lewis then builds on Williams's brief assessment of Satan's mock-worthy foolishness. Lewis writes that, although Milton's epic form has "subordinated the absurdity of Satan to the misery which he suffers and inflicts," Milton intentionally displays Satan's "absurdity," arguing that the very "nature of reality" demands that Satan's practice of "rant[ing] and postur[ing] through the whole universe" inevitably "awak[ens] the comic spirit" (93). Moreover, Milton himself was supremely aware of Satan's absurdities, for Milton "believed everything detestable to be, in the long run, also ridiculous" (93). Indeed, "mere Christianity commits every Christian to believing that 'the Devil is (in the long run) an ass'" (93).<sup>7</sup>

According to Lewis, Satan's absurdities are grounded in his "sense of injur'd merit" (1.98).<sup>8</sup> Satan claims to have suffered after he "thought himself impair'd" (5.665) by God the Father's exalting his Son as the "Head" (5.606) of the angels and commanding the angels, on pain of damnation, to worship the Son and "confess him Lord" (5.608). Lewis unflinchingly emphasizes the absurdity of Satan's ridiculous discontent:

He thought himself impaired because Messiah had been pronounced Head of the Angels. These are the "wrongs" which Shelley described as "beyond measure." A being superior to himself in kind, by whom he himself had been created [...] had been preferred to him in honour by an authority whose right to do so was not disputable [...]. No one had in fact done anything to Satan [...] he only thought himself impaired. In the midst of a world of light and love, of song and feast and dance, he could find nothing to think of more interesting than his own prestige. (94)

Noting that Satan's subsequent speech to his legions which inspires their rebellion contains laughable contradiction, Lewis argues that throughout *Paradise Lost* Satan "is engaged in sawing off the branch he is sitting on," for "a creature revolting against a creator is revolting

against the source of his own powers—including even his power to revolt” (94). Lewis contends that Satan’s “diseased, perverted, twisted” rebellion “means misery for the feelings and corruption for the will” and “means Nonsense for the intellect” (94).

Satan’s “doom of Nonsense” (95), Lewis writes, is exemplified in his debate with Abdiel, the loyal angel who confronts Satan after he successfully exhorts his legions to rebel. Most notably, Abdiel rebukes Satan for his illogicality in refusing to submit to the Son, “by whom / As by his Word the mighty Father made / All things, ev’n thee, and all the Spirits of Heav’n” (5.835-37). Satan first responds incredulously—“who saw/ When this creation was?” (856-57)—before hubristically denying that God created the angels: “We know no time when we were not as now; / Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais’d / By our own quick’ning power” (859-61). Commenting on this debate, Lewis emphasizes Satan’s illogicality and foolishness. Having logically rebutted Satan’s absurd ontological pronouncement, Lewis ridicules Satan’s “happy” (95) and “triumphant [...] theory that he sprouted from the soil like a vegetable” (96). Lewis continues: “Thus, in twenty lines, the being too proud to admit derivation from God, has come to rejoice in believing that he ‘just grew’ like Topsy or a turnip” (96). Here Lewis reduces the alleged magnificence of Satan’s rebellion to the pathetic ignorance of the impish slave girl of Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, who, denying having mother or father, and resisting the notion God created her, tells Miss Ophelia, “spect I grow’d” (Stowe 282). Few readers know that Lewis’s rather infamous comparison between Satan and Topsy was taken directly from Williams, whom Lewis does not here reference.<sup>9</sup>

Lewis also calls nonsensical Satan’s speech to his minions from his throne in Hell (2.11-43), in which Satan displays his “proud imaginations” (2.10) by lauding the fallen angels’ new state, whose universal misery prevents “envy” toward superiors (2.27) and thus offers Satan and his followers political stability and great advantages in their quest to retake Heaven. Lewis notes Satan’s self-contradictory logic: “A stability based on perfect misery, and therefore diminishing with each

alleviation of that misery, is held out as something likely to assist in removing the misery altogether" (96). The absurdities Satan espouses during these two scenes demonstrates in him "the horrible co-existence of a subtle and incessant intellectual activity with an incapacity to understand anything" (96). And Satan's declining intellectual capacity is the self-inflicted logical consequence of his continuing evil choices to evade the reality grounded upon the ultimate truth he denies. In Lewis's words, God's judgment on Satan is "*thy* will be done." Satan "says 'Evil be thou my good' [4.110] (which includes 'Nonsense be thou my sense') and his prayer is granted" (96).

Satan's foolish choices also bring about what Lewis famously calls Satan's "progressive degradation" throughout the poem (97). In sum, having first hatched a "misconceived" battle against God for the sake of "liberty" (see 5.793), Satan quickly "sinks to fighting for 'Honour, Dominion, glorie, and renoune' (VI, 422)" (Lewis 97). Defeated by the Son, Satan again "sinks" to "the design of ruining two creatures who had never done him any harm, no longer in the serious hope of victory, but only to annoy the Enemy, whom he cannot directly attack" (97). Spying on Adam and Eve in Eden, he sinks further, acting as "not even a political spy, but a mere peeping Tom leering and writhing in prurience as he overlooks the privacy of two lovers"; described no longer "as the fallen Archangel or Hell's dread Emperor, but simply as 'the Devil' (IV, 502)—the salacious grotesque, half bogey and half buffoon, of popular tradition" (97). Lewis summarizes Satan's "progressive degradation": "From hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows, and thence to a toad, and finally to a snake—such is the progress of Satan" (97).

Related to Lewis's insistence on Satan's foolishness and degradation is his argument against the idea that Satan is the most interesting character in *Paradise Lost*. Rather, Lewis contends, "in real life," Adam would be "better company" (99). Lewis contrasts Adam's wide intellectual curiosity and celebratory disposition with "Satan's monomaniac concern with himself and his supposed rights and wrongs" (100).

Satan, Lewis writes, compulsively “states his position” (99) in response to each of his circumstances throughout the poem. Indeed, “Satan has been in the Heaven of Heavens and in the abyss of Hell, and surveyed all that lies between them, and in that whole immensity has found only one thing that interests Satan”—himself (100). Lewis concludes that Satan “is interesting to read about; but Milton makes plain the blank uninterestingness of *being* Satan” (100). Not faulting but rather again affirming Milton’s artistic dexterity, Lewis avers that Milton has intentionally created Satan the megalomaniac to be, ultimately, the kind of person who, though initially impressing us with his bigger-than-life personality, turns out to be an egotistical colossal bore from whom we politely flee lest we subject ourselves to his tiresome self-focused conversation.

Having detailed Satan’s degradation, Lewis rejects the critical supposition that Milton, after displaying Satan’s glorious self-aggrandizing rhetoric in Books 1 and 2, tardily “attempted to rectify the error” by displaying a less attractive Satan later on. Lewis counters that Milton’s goal in those books was “to be fair to evil, to give it a run for its money—to show it *first* at the height, with all its rants and melodrama and ‘Godlike imitated state’ [2.511] about it, and *then* to trace what actually becomes of such self-intoxication when it encounters reality” (97). Indeed, when Milton “put the most specious aspects of Satan at the very beginning of his poem[,] he was relying on two predispositions in the minds of his readers, which in that age, would have guarded them from our later misunderstanding. Men still believed that there really was such a person as Satan, and that he was a liar” (98). Milton “did not foresee that his work would one day meet the disarming simplicity of critics who take for gospel things said by the father of falsehood in public speeches to his troops” (98). Indeed, the pro-Satan critics are as absurd as Satan himself.

But whatever Satan’s obvious moral failings and absurdities, he is, Lewis maintains, “of course” Milton’s “best drawn” character (98). And here Lewis also implicitly explains why Milton’s God the Father is, as he writes later in the book, a comparatively “unsatisfactory”

depiction (126). This is because, for Milton, as with almost all writers, it is easier to effectively depict an evil character than a “good” one. Lewis explains:

To make a character worse than oneself it is only necessary to release imaginatively from control some of the bad passions which, in real life, are always straining at the leash; the Satan, the Iago, the Becky Sharp, within each of us, is always there and only too ready, the moment the leash is slipped, to come out and have in our books that holiday we try to deny them in our lives. But if you try to draw a character better than yourself, all you can do is to take the best moments you have had and to imagine them prolonged and more consistently embodied in action. But the real high virtues which we do not possess at all, we cannot depict except in a purely external fashion. (98)

Thus Lewis explains Satan’s aesthetic excellence through a call for us to recognize our common sinfulness and the art it paradoxically inspires. This notion also sets up Lewis’s response to the argument that Milton’s magnificent depiction of Satan belies Milton’s unconscious moral alliance with his diabolical creation.

Regarding this alleged Miltonic “‘sympathy’ with Satan,” Lewis writes that Milton’s “expression in Satan of his own pride, malice, folly, misery, and lust, is true in a sense, but not in a sense peculiar to Milton” (99). Again, the answer lies in humanity’s common moral depravity:

The Satan in Milton enables him to draw the character well just as the Satan in us enables us to receive it. Not as Milton, but as man, he has trodden the burning marl, pursued vain war with heaven, and turned aside with leer malign. A fallen man *is* very much like a fallen angel. That, indeed, is one of the things which prevents the Satanic predicament from becoming comic. It is too near us; and doubtless Milton expected all readers to perceive that in the long run either the Satanic predicament or else the delighted obedience of Messiah, of Abdiel, of Adam, and of Eve, must be their own. (99)

Here Lewis’s insights anticipate Stanley Fish’s classic reader-response criticism, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (1967). Readers, Milton (and Lewis) hopes, will recognize in Satan their own sinfulness and wisely choose to turn away from such folly.



Lewis concludes his discussion of Satan by exhorting readers to soberly consider how they regard him. "To admire Satan," Lewis writes, "is to give one's vote not only for a world of misery, but also for a world of lies and propaganda, of wishful thinking, of incessant biography. Yet the choice is possible. Hardly a day passes without some slight movement towards it in each one of us. That is what makes *Paradise Lost* so serious a poem. The thing is possible, and the exposure of it is resented. Where *Paradise Lost* is not loved, it is deeply hated" (100). Lewis explains why such readerly resentment takes place: "We have all skirted the Satanic island closely enough to have motives for wishing to evade the full impact of the poem"; moreover, "Satan *wants* to go on being Satan. That is the real meaning of his choice 'Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n' [1.263]" (100). Readers are faced with a similar choice; Lewis warns them against following Satan, but he acknowledges that some will consider Satan's just-quoted phrase "a fine thing to say" (100). Lewis's analysis here resembles his earlier notion that pro-Satan critics display a foolishness that resembles Satan's own. But here Lewis's accusation is broader: those who favor Satan reveal their own Satanic proclivities, proclivities that go beyond common human fallenness. For such readers have seen Satan exposed in all his evil, lies, and foolishness, and yet have chosen to align themselves with him.

### Lewis's Oversimplification of and Insufficient Acknowledgement of Previous Critics

In the pages that follow, a common theme of many critics' responses to Lewis's analysis of Satan is that it is too simple. Before discussing these critics, however, we should recognize that one demonstrably simplistic aspect of Lewis's discussion is his sweeping representation of the critics who preceded him. When Lewis implies that Williams's negative assessment of Satan is "the recovery of a true critical tradition after more than a hundred years of laborious misunderstanding" (v), he ignores the many negative assessments of Satan published after

Shelley's aforementioned pronouncements. Indeed, numerous nineteenth and earlier twentieth century critics disputed the pro-Satan position, including British authors Walter Savage Landor, John Wilson, J. W. Morris, Stopford Brooke, Shadworth H. Hodson, Anna Buckland, and John Dennis (see Huckabay 203-05) as well as A. W. Verity.<sup>10</sup> Somewhat anticipating Lewis's approach to Satan, Morris's 1862 discussion of Satan warns against the Romantic practice of reading certain seemingly sympathetic passages in isolation without acknowledging the larger scope of Milton's epic and its critique of Satan's character (see Morris 16, 19, 23). Perhaps most notably, Brooke's 1879 volume, *Milton*, dedicates some twelve pages (138-49) to discussing Satan's "process of degrading" (138), anticipating Lewis's noted discussion of Satan's internal degradation. And Verity's 1894 essay "On the Character of Milton's Satan" again anticipates Lewis in denying Satan's heroism, not only for his "egotism" and "pride" (142), but also for Satan's "self-degradation" that changes "ever for the worse" his "shape and mind and emotion" (143). But Lewis mentions none of these critics. On the American side, critics such as Paul Elmer More (250-51), James Holly Hanford (*Milton* 150, 156-57; "Dramatic" 188), and Edwin Greenlaw (353) addressed matters of Satan's malice, perverted will and intellect, and external and spiritual decline in ways that also anticipate Lewis's discussion. Indeed, E. M. W. Tillyard in his 1930 book *Milton* likely has these writers in mind when stating that much critical opinion, particularly in America, "had already reacted against the Satanists" (1). But Lewis is silent on these American critics, even Hanford, whose status as a premier Miltonist was well established before Lewis composed *A Preface*. As Joseph Wittreich observes, Lewis's inexplicable failure to credit earlier challenges to the Satanist position makes dubious Lewis's contention that he, along with Williams, is "commencing a new" "critical tradition" instead of continuing an established one (Wittreich, "Speaking" 268).

A particularly significant challenge to the Satanist argument that Lewis minimizes was put forth by Sir Herbert Grierson, who dealt a devastating blow against Satan's Romantic heroism in a 1926 review

of Denis Saurat's *Milton: Man and Thinker* (1925). Grierson offered, based on an orthodox Christian understanding of the use of "begotten" in Psalm 2:7 and Hebrews 1:5, groundbreaking analysis regarding God the Father's use of the word "begot." Grierson demonstrated that, when the Father announces, "This day I have begot whom I declare / My only Son" (5.603-04)—a statement that directly precedes his command that the angels worship and serve the Son, which, as noted above, elicits Satan's "th[inking] himself impaired" and subsequent rebellion—"begot" actually means "exalted," not, as Shelley and many subsequent Miltonists, including Saurat (the Milton scholar whom Lewis engages the most) argued, "created." Grierson repeated this analysis in his highly influential 1937 book, *Milton and Wordsworth*. And although Grierson maintained his own sympathy for Satan, his analysis of "begot" essentially destroyed the most persuasive ontological justification for Satan's rebellion. In his history of *Paradise Lost* criticism, John Leonard emphasizes Grierson's significance: "Critics since Shelley had assumed that Satan rebelled because God 'begot' (created) an upstart younger sibling. Grierson's recovery of the true meaning of 'begot' effectively deprived Satan of one of his strongest claims upon the reader's sympathy. The twentieth-century reappraisal of Satan might not have happened but for Grierson's discovery" (*Faithful* 393).

But Lewis's handling of Grierson's work is almost dismissive. Without mentioning Grierson's biblically based analysis of "begot," Lewis, while critiquing Saurat's assertion that "begot" means "created" (Saurat 99) writes, "it is obvious that 'This day I have begot' must mean 'This day I have exalted,' for otherwise it is inconsistent with the rest of the poem" (85). Lewis adds a footnote: "The real question between Professor Saurat and Sir Herbert Grierson on this point is whether a sense which contradicts the rest of the poet's story is more, or less, probable than one that agrees with it" (85). But Lewis gives no context to his mentioning Grierson, citing neither of his above publications. And instead of mentioning the import of Grierson's analysis of "begot," Lewis treats the challenge of exegeting 5.603-04 as an

obvious matter, ignoring that the belief that the Father creates the Son just before he commands the angels to worship him (see 5.603-08) is what grounds Shelley's defense of Satan, even as it does the defenses of Satan offered by Saurat, Walter Bagehot in 1859 (209), and, perhaps most significantly, Walter Raleigh (82), whose seminal 1900 book, *Milton*, significantly developed and offered critical "respectability" to the Romantic view of Satan as hero (Barker 421).

Lewis fails to engage Raleigh's developed analysis of Satan, and he certainly oversimplifies Shelley's discussion of Milton's Satan. Remarkably, Lewis quotes only three words of Shelley's brief but supremely influential comments on Satan. As I discussed above, Lewis, writing of Satan's resentment against the Father's begetting of the Son, states that Satan "thought himself impaired because Messiah had been pronounced Head of the Angels. These are the 'wrongs' which Shelley described as 'beyond measure'" (94). But if we reexamine Shelley's larger statement, we may see that Lewis misrepresents and unfairly dismisses Shelley's concerns. In his Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley writes:

The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. (120-21)

First, we may see that the "wrongs" Shelley believes that Milton's Father inflicts upon Satan include not, as Lewis implies, merely that the Son has been "pronounced Head of the Angels" but also, according to Shelley's understanding, that Satan is being commanded to worship and serve a being who had just been created earlier that day. Moreover, the particular "wrong" that may be said to be beyond "all measure" is that Satan has been not merely punished, but is eternally

damned and tortured for what Shelley considers to be justified rebellion against the “tyrant” God and his “Malignity” (Shelley, *On the Devil* 388). In his *Defence*, Shelley writes of the “tyrant” God’s “horrible revenge” against Satan through his “design of exasperating [Satan] to deserve new torments” (290). Whatever one thinks of Satan’s rebellion and subsequent punishment, it seems irresponsible for Lewis not to mention Satan’s damnation as one of the “wrongs” Shelley decries. Shelley’s concerns go well beyond the idea that Satan must play second fiddle to the boss’s son. Lewis also ignores Shelley’s concerns about Satan. As Richard Strier notes, although he admired Satan “as a literary creation,” Shelley “did not admire Satan [...] as a moral being” (272). As his words above show, Shelley attributes to Satan negative traits that compromise his moral status as well as any kind of appropriate sympathy—or “interest”—from the audience. Furthermore, Satan has deleterious intellectual and moral effects on his audience, who, engaging in “a pernicious casuistry,” excuse Satan’s many faults because the “wrongs” done to Shelley by Milton’s immoral God greatly exceed Satan’s own moral failings. Strier writes that Shelley “thought Satan was awful. But he thought [Milton’s] God was worse” (272). Significantly, in 1948 Allan H. Gilbert asserted that Lewis’s and Shelley’s views on Satan have important similarities (see Gilbert 224). But none of this is evident simply by reading *A Preface*. Indeed, Lewis’s failure to more closely engage Shelley’s comments on Satan breeds an inaccuracy of analysis that obfuscates such similarities even as such obfuscation, however perhaps unintentional, allows Lewis to exaggerate the degree to which his analysis of Satan is original.

### The Critical Response to Lewis Begins: Waldock’s Forgotten Article

The critical response to *A Preface*’s discussion of Satan came promptly and consistently for the next decade. The first retort came in 1943 in a brief and generally forgotten article by A. J. A. Waldock tellingly entitled “Mr. C. S. Lewis and *Paradise Lost*: The Problem of Approach.” This essay, appearing in the newer and then comparatively

obscure Australian journal *Southerly*, is mostly unknown even to Milton scholars. But Waldock's article set up various issues at stake for respondents to Lewis's *Preface*, issues that have been repeated in various forms in the subsequent three-quarters of a century. Having called *A Preface* "a very brilliant essay" (7), Waldock specifically challenges Lewis's suggestion that his Christianity benefits his understanding *Paradise Lost* (Lewis 64). For Waldock, Lewis's interpretive situation is more mixed. Lewis's Christianity

is an advantage in some ways—not in all ways; for Mr. Lewis, I think, is almost too sympathetic with *Paradise Lost* to see it as it really is. He understands very well what Milton intended; he does not seem to me to understand nearly so well what Milton achieved. His contention, indeed, is that once Milton's purposes have been thoroughly grasped, nearly every important ground of objection against the poem disappears. Find out what Milton was driving at, he says, and it all comes right. (7)

Waldock is skeptical about such a contention, and he wonders "if the case is quite so simple" (8), the first of many times critics will subtly or forcefully level the charge that Lewis's assertions are somehow overly simplistic or dogmatic; significantly, as in Waldock's case, those challenges are usually accompanied by a certain skepticism concerning Lewis's Christianity and the likelihood that Lewis's faith in some way limits his greater appreciation for or understanding of the complexities of Milton's epic.

Concerning Lewis's analysis of Satan, Waldock observes Lewis's contention that Satan is Milton's "most impressive" character, stating that Lewis "quickly forestalls any question why this should be so" (9). Waldock does not pursue this matter, but we should keep in mind his briefly stated objection. Indeed, in the decades to follow, the charge that Lewis's *Preface* has somehow forestalled or prevented the asking of certain questions has been repeated on various occasions.<sup>11</sup>

More to Waldock's concern is the confidence with which Lewis asserts that, as with Milton's Satan, the "bad" character in any given work will always be the most effectively written because, to quote Waldock's paraphrase of Lewis, "To draw a 'bad' character, a writer

has only to relax and be himself; to draw a 'good' one he has to rise above himself." But Lewis offers "no evidence" to "support" this "ingenious theory"; indeed, "it is not difficult to think of numerous examples that appear to refute it" (10). Waldock considers, among others, the characters of Shakespeare. Cordelia, he contends, is "at least as credible" as Edmund (10). And although Lewis suggests that Iago is Shakespeare's most intriguing character, Waldock offers a credible refutation: "Shakespeare's great successes, of course, were in the middle regions" (10). Hamlet, for example, is not "good" or "bad"—he "is a natural man, with a natural man's unevenness and imperfections; but he is a very wonderful natural man; he is in many respects the most wonderful specimen of a natural man that the human imagination has yet produced. And he is there, he exists. By comparison with him Iago is but a structure of lath and plaster" (10). Waldock here implicitly suggests that perhaps Milton succeeds so well with Satan because he too, like Hamlet, is, ironically enough, "in the middle regions"—a character who, wonderfully, exhibits "unevenness and imperfections" even amid his damned state. If so, the matter of Satan is, to borrow Waldock's earlier statement, not "quite so simple" as what Lewis has put forward. Moreover, Waldock's critique of Lewis's overly simplistic critical explanation of Satan's artistic effectiveness will be extended onto different subjects by various future critics, each warning that Lewis's assertions, however seemingly compelling at first, are inevitably open to challenges that Lewis does not properly anticipate and address, challenges that Lewis's readers will likely not consider in light of his clever, forceful, and authoritative rhetoric.

### Elmer Edgar Stoll's Defense of Satan

The next response to *A Preface* was offered in 1944 by the venerable American critic Elmer Edgar Stoll in "Give the Devil His Due: A Reply to Mr. Lewis," published in the prestigious *Review of English Studies*. Having praised the "many excellent things" Lewis has said about

Milton, “particularly his style,” Stoll asserts that he is “extraordinarily mistaken” about *Paradise Lost*’s characters, particularly Satan (108). Specifically, Stoll complains that Lewis portrays Satan not as a “magnificent figure” but largely as “silly and contemptible” (108), resulting in unfair generalizations concerning Satan’s character. Responding to Lewis’s contention regarding Satan’s ludicrous pride, Stoll writes, “not all pride, of course, is petty,” and he quotes from Satan’s first speech in Hell, which articulates a “motive” that “is certainly above the inglorious level of Mr. Lewis’s preferences” and exhibits “defiance triumphing over defeat” (109). Stoll quotes perhaps Satan’s most powerful lines in the epic:

[...] so much the stronger prov’d  
 He with his Thunder: and till then 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 chang’d in outward luster; that fixt mind  
 And high disdain, from sense of injur’d merit,  
 That with the mightiest rais’d me to contend,  
 And to the fierce contention brought along  
 Innumerable force of Spirits arm’d  
 That durst dislike his reign, and mee (sic!) preferring,  
 His utmost power with adverse power oppos’d  
 In dubious Battle on the Plains of Heav’n,  
 And shook his throne. 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. (1.92-111)<sup>12</sup>

Stoll follows Satan’s lines by affirming R. A. Scott-James’s 1928 assessment of them: “The sentiment is excellent. The moral is a noble one. It recalls all the admirable ethical qualities which Milton gives his heroic Satan” (Scott-James 278; quoted in Stoll 110). For Stoll, Scott-James’s observations are self-evident. This earlier critic’s sensitive recognition of Satan’s sublime nobility trumps Lewis’s “inglorious”



and narrow-minded “preferences.” Stoll’s implicit admonition is that a reader like Scott-James who emphasizes Satan’s aesthetic greatness can recognize his ethical greatness as well. One like Lewis who is constrained by his theological “preferences” cannot.

Stoll then quotes the following lines spoken by Satan:

Fall’n Cherub, to be weak is miserable (1.157)

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
 Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n.  
 What matter where, if I be still the same,  
 And what I should be, all but less than hee  
 Whom Thunder hath made greater?  
 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. (1.254-63)

Stoll exclaims, “What a difference between the two conceptions, the critic’s and the poet’s!” chiding Lewis for his failure to make “allowance for the improbabilities—the contradictions—involved in the story of a rebellion in Heaven, against a faultless, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent Deity” (110). Again, for Stoll, the greatness of Satan’s character is self-evident here, albeit lost on Lewis. Stoll acknowledges that if Lewis’s ideal scenario of God’s faultlessness were “realized,” then Satan “of course” really would exemplify “utter wickedness and folly” and that Satan would be “the worst of fools” (110). But, Stoll argues, “the poet” prevents such a scenario, and Milton’s God’s behavior is such that “the sympathetic and judicious reader” maintains his interest in Satan, not being distracted by the theological contradictions implicit in Milton’s narrative (110-11); Lewis “misrepresents Milton’s meaning” when he argues that Satan is “wicked, petty, and despicable from the beginning” of *Paradise Lost* (111).

Ultimately, Stoll contends, Lewis's failure is that he treats Satan's "superhuman character [...] in the light of common sense," displaying an "imagination" that "stubbornly refuses to respond" to the "passionate paradoxes" of Satan's sublimity (113). And Lewis displays a similar failure of imagination when he explains Satan's poetic magnificence, for he offers a "moral and theological" explanation instead of a "psychological and artistic" one (122). Like Waldock but more subtly, Stoll suggests that Lewis's Christianity prevents him from embracing the full beauty and complexity of Milton's poetry and Satan's character. If Lewis contends that readers who admire Satan choose him because they embrace the evil within themselves, then Stoll argues that "judicious" readers can appreciate artistic grandeur without such appreciation being derailed by religious dogma and its attendant obligations to pronounce as inferior creations that challenge their presuppositions. By contrast, the "critic" Lewis's theological judgments carry him away from an understanding of the "poet" Milton, whose magnificent depiction of Satan transcends religious categorizations.

Curiously, Stoll does not mention perhaps the most damning evidence in favor of his suggestion that Lewis is deaf to Satan's sublimity: the fact that nowhere in his chapter does Lewis quote more than a few words of the speeches Stoll quotes or any of Satan's other famously powerful speeches in Books 1 and 2. This is a truly remarkable omission, for these powerful orations are what most critics have emphasized when arguing for Satan's grandeur. Although perhaps Lewis assumed his audience would be intimately familiar with these speeches, we may recognize that Lewis's failure to quote these speeches unfairly obfuscates Satan's nobility, thus presenting readers Lewis's strong position while shielding them and even himself from the inconvenient attractions of Satan's glorious rhetoric.

Against Lewis, Stoll puts forward as superior Raleigh's analysis of Satan, whom Raleigh compares to Prometheus even more favorably than does Shelley. Raleigh writes:

His very situation as the fearless antagonist of Omnipotence makes him either a fool or a hero, and Milton is far indeed from permitting us to think him a fool. The nobility and greatness of his bearing are brought home to us in some half-dozen of the finest poetic passages in the world. (Raleigh 133; qtd. in Stoll 115)

The “great critic” (Stoll 115) Raleigh understands, as Lewis does not, that Milton the poet would not “throw [...] away” the artistic sublimity of Satan on a character who “is unworthy” of such a depiction (116). For Stoll, Lewis the commonsense Christian moralist cannot recognize the poet Milton’s larger embrace of his, in Lewis’s words, “magnificent poetical achievement” (Lewis 92). Indeed, Stoll’s analysis reveals Lewis’s inability to reconcile his affirmation of Satan as a “magnificent poetical achievement” and his religiously motivated impulse to degrade Satan, the character who is that magnificent achievement. That same impulse, Stoll suggests, motivates Lewis’s insistence that Milton stands within the great orthodox Augustinian tradition and that he has labored to reveal his greatest character as petty and foolish.

More Sympathy for Satan and Suspicion of Lewis:

G. Rostrevor Hamilton

Raleigh’s above quotation forms the title and central subject matter for G. Rostrevor Hamilton’s brief book *Hero or Fool? A Study of Milton’s Satan* (1944), which seeks to answer Lewis’s charge that Satan “is absurd and nonsensical” (7).<sup>13</sup> To answer the question “Hero or Fool?” Hamilton asserts, we must “turn again to the text of the poem” (8). Before he begins his textual analysis, however, Hamilton points out that readers, like “Milton himself,” come to *Paradise Lost* with tremendous “prejudice” against Satan, although Hamilton grants that we ought not “throw [...] overboard our moral sense” as we approach Milton’s poem. Nonetheless, “Satan *in imagination* differs from Satan *in idea*,” for although we or Milton may abstractly conceive him as unmitigated evil, our imaginations “seek in him some credible mix-

ture of good with evil," something that rightly comports with his role as a rebel "fighting a lost and hopeless cause," one in whom we find both "folly and heroism" (8).

Examining specific passages from *Paradise Lost*, Hamilton pointedly distinguishes between Milton the imaginative poet and Milton the moralist. Quoting, like Stoll, from Satan's magnificent opening speech, Hamilton writes that Satan's words exhibit "more than malice" and "bombast," but also "greatness, indeed sublimity, in courage, endurance and determination" (9). Directly after Satan's speech, however, Milton's narrator decries "Satan's pride and malice" (10), implicitly warning readers against siding with the fallen angel. But this tension between Satan the poetic creation and the moralizing narrator, repeated throughout the epic, reveals more than hides Satan's virtues. Indeed, when Milton "allows free scope to his imagination, he presents us with an evil figure of real magnificence, in whom the great vices, although dominant, are shot through with great and substantial virtues." But Milton "the stern moralist" "clings tenaciously to his preconceived moral ideas" (10). Ultimately, "if Milton's purpose is at odds with his imagination, it is certainly from the latter that we should form our judgment of Satan. For Milton the poet is inexpressibly greater and more comprehensive than Milton the moralist, and it is only the imagination that makes Satan triumphantly alive" (11). We would be gravely mistaken "if we allowed Milton the moralist to browbeat us into denying credit to Satan for the qualities, exalted as well as mean, heroic as well as vicious, by which Milton the poet makes him live" (11).

Hamilton's monograph and Stoll's article, published in the same year, unsurprisingly do not reference each other, but there are clear parallels between their analyses. Indeed, Lewis the critic, portrayed by Stoll as in direct tension with Milton the poet, appears quite analogous to Hamilton's description of Milton the stern moralist. And while Hamilton never explicitly links Lewis with Milton's moralizing narrator, the parallels are implicit as Hamilton challenges Lewis's pronouncement of Satan's "absurdity." Lewis fails to recognize Sa-

tan's "spiritual greatness" and "can see in Satan at his height only rant and melodrama" (13). Hamilton takes Lewis to task for ignoring Milton's portrayal of Satan's "'undaunted' courage," and he finds Lewis's demeaning portrayal of Satan ironic in light of his assertion that Satan is Milton's best-drawn character (13; he quotes Lewis). Here, like Stoll, Hamilton finds Lewis's critical judgments to be in tension with themselves, with Lewis's ethical concerns undermining his ability to appreciate Milton's art. Moreover, Hamilton's implicit parallels between the epic's moralizing narrator and Lewis the moralizing critic anticipate Waldock's highly influential *Paradise Lost and Its Critics* (1947), which we shall presently address.

Throughout his ensuing pages, Hamilton implies that Lewis "oversimplif[ies]" (22) various matters about which he judges Satan and his alleged absurdities and foolishness. Because "good and evil [...] are not severed in Satan," he does not, contra Lewis, "become laughable when he 'meets something real'" (16). Satan's speech to his followers at the beginning of Book 2 is not, as Lewis's charges, "ludicrous"; rather, "Mr. Lewis does not fairly represent the text" (19). More accurately in light of the context of his audience, Satan proves himself "the astute propagandist, rather than the fool" (21). Also unfair is Lewis's discussion of Satan's chafing at the Father begetting the Son and Satan's subsequent confrontation with Abdiel. Given Milton's unsatisfying portrayal of God, there is "surely some excuse" to doubt claims that he created the angels; moreover, Lewis unfairly subjects Satan to "merry-making" by comparing him to either "Topsy or the turnip" (23). If, more appropriately, we compare Satan's boasts of self-existence to "the autochthonous demi-gods of Greece" or "the Phoenix," Satan may be condemned for "self-pride," but "not for intellectual nonsense" (24). Lewis's Christian disapproval of Satan's vainglory ought not simultaneously demean Satan's intellect.

Finally, in "affect[ing] to trace the progressive degradation of Satan," Lewis himself "descends to the most intemperate and unfair arts of prosecution" (28). Particularly scandalous is Lewis's charge that Satan's downward trajectory moves from a peeping Tom, to a toad,

and to a snake. If, specifically, Satan descends lower than a peeping Tom—Lewis’s unfair charge against Satan when he views the embracing Adam and Eve with “jealous leer malign” (4.503), a phrase that more properly describes Satan’s damnation to loneliness and longing than some kind of laughable prurience—why then, while inhabiting the serpent, does Satan, beholding the lone Eve in her naked innocence, stand for a time “abstracted from his own evil” (28), “Stupidly good, of enmity disarm’d, / Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge” (9.465-66)? Hamilton argues that, rather than being the subject of Lewis’s mockery, “Satan’s plight” should be “matter for tears”; moreover, “if there should be any laughter, it could not be either heavenly or human: it could only be the laughter of some superior in evil, less infirm than Satan, who should stand to him as Lady Macbeth to her husband” (30). This indictment of Lewis is particularly effective because, instead of charging him with critical blindness because of his Christianity, it actually accuses Lewis, in his championing the thesis of Satan’s foolishness, of a kind of diabolical heartlessness, a heartlessness implicitly shared by any reader who has laughed at Lewis’s calling Satan “a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows” (Lewis 97). Remarkably, Hamilton here does not merely, like Stoll, challenge Lewis’s critical sensitivities; he also challenges his moral and spiritual decency, a heavy blow to Lewis the Christian critic who, if he can fathom charges of stuffiness, is ironically undercut by charges that his sensibilities are, ultimately, unchristian.

### Sydney Musgrove’s Guarded Defense of Lewis

A more sympathetic response to Lewis appeared the following year in Sydney Musgrove’s “Is the Devil an Ass?” Engaging with Waldock, Stoll, and Hamilton, Musgrove generally sides with Lewis but suggests he goes too far in arguing that Satan’s absurdity defines him even in Books 1 and 2. Musgrove writes, “One can admit everything [Lewis] says in Satan’s disfavour” yet recognize that “still the sense of glory remains”; indeed, although “our better logic and our better

conscience cry 'Wrong' and 'Evil,' the imagination still blazes with Satan's fiery grandeur" (304). Nonetheless, Milton likely intended "the more astute of his readers to see, as Mr. Lewis sees, the indefensibility of [Satan's] intellectual position"; however—and herein lies Musgrove's key difference from Lewis—Milton "did not intend that, *at this stage*, [Satan's] intellectual absurdity should remove the more prevailing impression of grandeur" (305). Rather, Milton intended that readers would see "the contrast between this first Satan"—whose grandeur shines amid the fires of Hell—and "the later Satan," whose "degradation begins" when he encounters his daughter Sin and their incestuous offspring, Death, at Hell-gate late in Book 2 (305) and as his folly and malice is increasingly exposed in Eden. Musgrove chides Raleigh, Stoll, and Hamilton for obfuscating the "bottomless cruelty" of Satan's machinations against Adam and Eve in Book 4 (308), and he judges as "impeccable" Lewis's analysis of Satan's rebellious speeches in Book 5, echoing Lewis's diction in calling Satan's words toward Abdiel "plain nonsense" (310).

But in his penultimate paragraph, Musgrove, for all his sympathy with Lewis, repeats the charge that he oversimplifies Satan. Musgrove argues, "Satan is neither the nincompoop seen by Mr. Lewis, nor the Prometheus of Shelley and Macaulay." Although Musgrove urges "full assent" to Lewis's depiction of "Satan's intellectual hollowness," he adds, "surely Mr. Lewis of all people should know that the intellectual impression is only part of the total impression left by any poetic experience" (314). Similarly, although Musgrove clearly affirms Lewis's notion of Satan's degradation, he argues that we do not "behold a straight and unswerving line of degradation," adding, tellingly, "truth is *not so simple* as that" (315, *italics mine*). Rather, Satan follows a general downward course in the epic, although Satan sometimes evidences "momentary recovery" in which he is moved, "momentarily, towards light and the memory of what he was" (315). And Lewis's failure to recognize these moments of recovery, like his aforementioned failure to quote and discuss the grandeur of Satan's early speeches, speaks to a significant deficiency in Lewis's coverage of

Satan: his avoidance of directly engaging Satan at his best moments, an engagement that would call for a more balanced assessment than Lewis offers.

### Waldock's Developed Challenge: *Paradise Lost and Its Critics*

By 1947, Waldock's brief article had grown into one of the most enduringly influential books in the history of Milton studies, *Paradise Lost and Its Critics*. Although, as its title suggests, this volume interacts with various commentators, Lewis is by far Waldock's most significant interlocutor. Waldock responds to Lewis on various subjects, but most famously in his chapter "Satan and the Technique of Degradation." Early on, Waldock defends Satan from Lewis's charge that Satan is "nonsensical" in Books 2 and 5. He chides Lewis for his demeaning and one-dimensional commentary on Satan's speech to his followers in 2.11-43; while acknowledging that Satan indulges in some "spurious impromptu reasoning," Waldock classifies the speech with those given by "able commanders" at "critical junctures since the dawn of history" (70). Indeed, "to appraise such a speech by logic alone is to bring under the same ban of Nonsense, by implication, half the great oratory of the world" (70). Waldock's challenge to Lewis regarding Satan's reply to Abdiel is even more forceful and developed. For Satan to question Abdiel's assertion that the Son created the angels is not "silly" but entirely appropriate. This idea is, as Satan says, a "strange point and new" (5.855), and it "must necessarily be based on hearsay" (71). Moreover, it is not "laughable" that Satan should chafe at both the Father's decree that the Angels worship the Son and the subsequent ethos of Heaven (73). Lewis calls Heaven "a world of light and love" (Lewis 94), but, answers Waldock, "There is no sign of love" in the Father's "dictatorial" decree, which is "full of threats" (73). Regarding Lewis's one-sided refusal to acknowledge Satan's admirable qualities, Waldock charges Lewis not with being overly logical, as Stoll charged, but rather with being "a sentimental-



ist" who "wishes to see Satan's character as made up of aesthetically harmonious qualities—of qualities that match" and who hesitates "to admit that we can condemn Satan for some things and at the same time find him extremely admirable for others" (76). Waldock insists, against Lewis, that Milton himself had much "sympath[y]" for Satan's admirable "qualities" without taking his side ethically (77).

Waldock then famously refutes Lewis's chronicling of Satan's "progressive degradation" throughout the epic (Lewis 97). For Waldock, Milton the moralist, not Satan himself, is responsible for Satan's downward trajectory. Satan "does not degenerate: *he is degraded*" by Milton's theological scruples (83). This process takes place in two stages: First, throughout Books 1 and 2, Milton follows Satan's glorious speeches—which put Satan in a more positive light than Milton the Christian could have wanted—with moralizing comments that "pull us gently by the sleeve" and tell readers "Do not be carried away by this fellow: he *sounds* splendid, but take my word for it ...'" (78). For example, after Satan's inspiring opening speech promising indefatigable rebellion, Milton the moralizing narrator comments, "So Spake th' Apostate Angel, though in pain, / Vaunting aloud, but rackt with deep despair" (1.125-26). Significantly, Waldock rejects the veracity of Milton's editorializations on Satan's character, warning against the "very naïve critical procedure" of accepting "Milton's comment" (78). In sum, "[e]ach great speech lifts Satan a little beyond what Milton really intended, so he suppresses him again (or tries to) in a comment" (78-79). Clearly Waldock includes Lewis the simplistic Christian "sentimentalist" (76) among the naïve readers who accept the narrator's words and thus suppress Satan's grandeur.

And an even more duplicitous means of degrading Satan occurs after Book 2, a degradation that explains why "[e]verybody feels that the Satan of the first two Books stands alone" and that "after them comes a break, and he is never as impressive again" (81). The reason, Waldock argues, goes beyond the notion that, in subsequent books, Satan "re-enters altered" (81). Rather, the Satan of Books 1 and 2 "*disappears*" (82), never to be seen again. The subsequent Satan "is not

a changed Satan, he is a *new* Satan" (82). In naming these two distinct Satans, Waldock justifies giving primacy to the Satan of Books 1 and 2 even as he claims he does justice to *Paradise Lost* as a whole. Waldock also implicitly undermines Lewis's larger argument against Satan, for both Lewis's view of the Satan of Book 1 as nonsensical and his overall view of a degenerating Satan align Lewis not with the imaginative greatness of Milton's poetry but rather with the puritanical side of Milton that, through narrative sermonizing and the bait-and-switch composition of the second Satan, degrades his most splendid creation. It is this Milton that Lewis the Christian can comprehend and explicate, not Milton the great epic poet. At the end of this chapter, Waldock refers to Lewis's chapter on "Satan's Followers" as "not so much of criticism, as of a sermon," calling a sermon something "entitled to use its text less as a subject for rigorous interpretation than as a convenient springboard for disquisition on moral truths" (96). Clearly Waldock thinks this well describes Lewis's discussion of Satan himself.

#### Allan H. Gilbert: Challenging Lewis's Detractors, Suggesting Lewis's Similarities to Shelley and Coleridge

The next detailed response to *A Preface*, Allan H. Gilbert's 1948 "Critics of Mr. C. S. Lewis on Milton's Satan," does not address Waldock but pointedly engages Hamilton and Stoll. In his opening paragraph, Gilbert, in contrast to Waldock and Stoll, suggests that Lewis's oft-discussed Christianity, his "seventeenth-century orthodoxy," actually offers Lewis greater interpretive insight concerning Satan: "Mr. Lewis, in estimating the Devil, has something of the advantages of a contemporary of Milton," for "the noble Satan is not to be found in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (216). For Gilbert, Lewis's critical shortcomings come not from his religious perspective but rather from a tendency to pen phrases "extreme in their rhetoric" (216)—he offers Lewis's memorable description of Satan as a "peeping Tom" (Lewis

97) and his comparing the allegedly “‘self-begot, self-raised’ Satan with Topsy or a turnip” (Gilbert 217). Gilbert is not particularly bothered by Lewis’s phraseology, but he offers here a mild version of the common argument that Lewis, one way or another, tends to oversimplify his points.

Gilbert then addresses Hamilton’s charge that Milton the “moralist” (and, by implication, Lewis the critic) is at odds with Milton the imaginative poet (220). Gilbert balks at this dichotomy, for it “amounts to doing over Milton to suit oneself, forgetting Manzoni’s advice to ask: ‘What is the poet’s intention?’” (220). Here, Gilbert not only raises the crucial matter of authorial intentionality—something that Milton’s “moralizing” narrator would seem to reveal—but also turns the tables upon Hamilton and other critics who suggest that Lewis’s Christianity causes him to view *Paradise Lost* according to his own philosophical preferences. Are not critics who cast off Milton the moralist doing the same thing, based on *their* own philosophical preferences?

Similarly, Gilbert finds unacceptable Stoll’s rejection of Lewis’s distinction between great poetry—the “magnificent poetic achievement” of Satan’s character—and the objectionable character Lewis describes Satan as being. Against Stoll’s claim that “the poet rightly and pretty effectively endeavours to keep the sympathetic and judicious reader from realizing” the alleged horror of rebelling against a faultless and omnipotent God (Stoll 110-11), Gilbert argues that Lewis, sharing Milton’s seventeenth-century perspective, would argue the opposite: that a contemporary of Milton would realize the evil in Satan’s rebellion (221). Again, Gilbert asks, which critic, Lewis or Stoll, is reading *Paradise Lost* according to the proper perspective, and is either of them free from philosophical bias in his judgments?

Gilbert also objects to Stoll’s using Shelley against Lewis. Quoting the aforementioned passage from the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, Gilbert observes Shelley’s moral concerns about Satan and also differentiates between Shelley’s qualified and Raleigh’s more enthusiastic praise of Satan. Shelley, like Lewis, distinguishes the greatness of Milton’s art from the immorality of his character. Ultimately, Gilbert

asserts, Shelley on Satan is closer to Lewis than Stoll. Similarly, Stoll is wrong to simultaneously praise Coleridge's 1819 assessment of Satan while disparaging Lewis's. Unlike Stoll, Gilbert quotes at length Coleridge's remarks about Satan, which include both Coleridge's declaration that Satan's "daring," "grandeur of sufferance," and "ruined splendour" [...] "constitute the very height of poetic sublimity"; and Coleridge's horror at Satan's "intense selfishness," "alcohol of egotism" and "lust of self," comparing him in the process to "the mighty hunters of mankind from Nimrod to Napoleon" (Coleridge 427; qtd. in Gilbert 223). Gilbert asks wryly, "Did Coleridge admire the character of Napoleon?" (223). Gilbert here demonstrates that Coleridge's assessment of Satan's character is very close to that of Lewis, who, Gilbert reminds readers, "believes Satan a magnificent poetical achievement" (216).

Gilbert's points regarding Lewis's analysis of Satan and its resemblances with those of Shelley and Coleridge are both valuable and unexpected to those who have read *A Preface* and the ensuing controversy the present essay discusses. But, per my earlier discussion of Lewis's failure to present Shelley's moral reservations about Satan, I believe that the deep presumed dichotomy between Lewis's position and that of the Romantics is largely the doing of Lewis, who, early in his opening paragraph on Satan, specifically contrasts his position from Shelley's and then, two paragraphs later, gravely oversimplifies Shelley's concerns about God's treatment of Satan. Lewis's neglect of Coleridge's discussion of Satan—a discussion which resembles Lewis's considerably more than does Shelley's—is perhaps even more lamentable, because in Coleridge Lewis might have found a critical ally who could have abetted his own analysis of Satan. It is hard to believe that the immensely well-read Lewis would have been ignorant of Coleridge's comments.<sup>14</sup> Did Lewis withhold Coleridge's insights because they might complicate Lewis's assertion that the "true critical tradition" (Lewis v) concerning Satan had been neglected since "the times of Blake and Shelley" (92)?

Gilbert also challenges the idea that Lewis's Christianity obscures his ability to understand *Paradise Lost's* complexity. While discussing Shelley, Gilbert postulates that Lewis's Christianity inspires him, in contrast to Shelley, to believe—like Lewis thought Milton believed—that Satan “suffered no wrongs and displayed the most serious faults” (223). Gilbert then raises a question that recalls Lewis's memorable remark that “Many of those who say they dislike Milton's God only mean that they dislike God” (Lewis 126). Gilbert asks: “Is [Lewis's] religion—and Milton's—what Stoll objects to?” (223). Gilbert then suggests that it is Stoll, not Lewis, whose literary interpretation is clouded by a blinding allegiance to another power. Lewis believes, sensibly enough, that “Satan is morally bad though magnificently presented”; whereas “Stoll, unlike Shelley, holds, not that the character of Satan engenders casuistry, but rather that we forget [his] faults in single admiration” (223). Indeed, the venerable Professor Stoll has far greater allegiance to Satan than the “Satanist” Shelley. Perhaps Lewis's Christianity can be forgiven.

Gilbert concludes by turning on its head the common critical refrain against Lewis's alleged oversimplification of Satan. For one thing, Lewis has, in his discussion of Satan's degradation, engaged the larger text and helped further the recent “rediscovery of the latter books of *Paradise Lost*” (224), books often neglected in earlier criticism that focused on Books 1 and 2. And the “controversy” that *A Preface* has elicited alerts us to the fact that “[t]here is something in the nature of the poem to provoke” that controversy (224). Indeed, Lewis is largely responsible—both through his own work and those who have responded to him—for helping readers understand the complexity of Milton's epic. Gilbert mentions the “two Satans” critics have recently been discussing, and in doing so he implicitly reminds us that this crucial topic has resulted from Lewis's engaging Milton and subsequent critics' engaging Milton and Lewis. Ultimately, Lewis has “emphasized” “[t]he variety of *Paradise Lost*,” and readers needn't “abandon” what Romantic readers saw as we “add still other ways” to view Milton's great epic (225). “We,” Gilbert concludes, “can thank Mr.

Lewis for his vigorous attempt to reveal to us one aspect of Milton's infinite variety" (225). To his credit, Gilbert recognizes that, ironically enough, Lewis's so-called critical simplicity has both articulated and elicited valuable avenues in understanding Satan's multifaceted depiction.

### Stoll's Second Attack on Lewis's Religious Moralizing

Stoll does not respond to Gilbert in his 1949 "A Postscript to 'Give the Devil His Due,'" but he clearly believes that other critics have not given *Stoll* his due. Indeed, Stoll chides Waldock for not acknowledging how his 1944 article anticipated important points in Waldock's book,<sup>15</sup> and he announces that in his present article he will not acknowledge Waldock (167n1). But Stoll—as if Gilbert's (again) unacknowledged article has liberated him to declare more forcefully what he suggests in his 1944 article—essentially echoes and even intensifies Waldock's criticism of how Lewis's religious moralizing prevents him from properly engaging Milton's poem and its artistic greatness:

At bottom the trouble with Mr. Lewis and his followers, I think, is simply that, ignoring, in the process, the impossible but indispensable postulates of the story, they listen to the censor, not the poet; or make the censor swallow up the poet, and themselves forget that these devils are great angels straight down from out of Heaven, who—Beëlzebub, Moloch, Mammon, and Belial, as well as Satan—talk like it, and though still a little in keeping with their names and later reputations, not much as the reader of the Hebrew Scriptures would expect them to talk. (176)

Here again we see the implicit association between Lewis and Milton's "censoring" narrator, and here Lewis's Christianity—in the form of "the reader of the Hebrew Scriptures"—is posited as a potential interpretive disadvantage because of the potentially unshakable presuppositions they instill in one's understanding of Milton's fallen

angels. For Stoll, the matter of Lewis's religious oversimplification of things remains an unshakable tenet.

### R. J. Zwi Werblowsky: Lewis's Critical Blindness

The final sustained engagement with Lewis's depiction of Satan that we shall examine is R. J. Zwi Werblowsky's *Lucifer and Prometheus: A Study of Milton's Satan* (1952), whose opening chapter challenges Lewis's suggestion that Satan, in his "wickedness and meanness, his cruelty, falseness and intellectual hollowness" falls into "complete idiocy" (4). Werblowsky writes that the "method" and "failure" of "the anti-Satanist case" "are exhibited almost to perfection" in *A Preface* and that a proper "examination" of Lewis's book is necessary to "clear the ground for a more comprehensive vision of Satan and of the role he plays in *Paradise Lost*" (5). In this statement, Werblowsky, despite his resentment against Lewis, whose "debunking campaign [...] against Satan is the most thorough and cogently argued that has been made so far" (5), acknowledges not only the quality and influence of *A Preface*, but also suggests that such an "examination" can be a fruitful point of departure for a very different analysis of Satan's character.

As he begins to critique Lewis, Werblowsky suggests that his discussion of Satan is devoid of the aesthetic sensitivity Lewis has exhibited elsewhere: "Satan has been made the object of all Mr. Lewis' hair-splitting logic, persuasive charm and subtle irony, but unfortunately of none of his poetic feeling and artistic receptivity, of which he has given so much proof on other occasions" (5). Werblowsky continues, arguing that Lewis's biting wit, exhibited in his memorable put-downs of Satan, obscure a proper pursuit of truth: "Cleverness is a virtue of very doubtful value. Far from solving any real problems, whether in theology, philosophy, and art (including poetry), it more often tends to obscure the truth, leading at its best to intellectual unauthenticity, at its worst to downright dishonesty. Cleverness is Mr.

Lewis' greatest pitfall, and vitiates much of his most brilliant work. Neither the problem of evil, nor that of pain, can be adequately treated with logic-chopping" (5-6). Like Hamilton before him, Werblowsky will decry the moral improprieties of Lewis's mockery of Satan. Here, however, he emphasizes the deleterious argumentative effects of Lewis's wit, which shortchanges logical argument and critical investigation in favor of the humorous effect of sarcasm.

Werblowsky contends that "the most convincing and decisive argument" against Lewis's "logic-chopping" impulse "remains the poem itself," but it must be "read with the ears and the heart [...] not with the brain alone" (6); a reader must be able to properly *feel*, as it were, the poem and its art, and not merely accept the orthodoxies directly laid out by the poem's narrator. But in any case, Lewis's rationalistic attempt to relegate Satan into the realm of unmitigated evil flies in the face of Milton's primary point of grounding for the principle of free inquiry championed in his *Areopagitica*: the idea that "as the world goes, good and evil coexist everywhere"; for, as Milton writes, "'Good and evil we know in this field of the world, grow up together almost inseparably'" (6). Werblowsky continues: "and to this rule his Satan is no exception. He has a host of fine qualities with which Milton and his readers must and do sympathize" (6). Werblowsky's use of Milton's famous quotation from *Areopagitica* is intriguing, albeit perhaps a false analogy. One might object that Satan is an eternally damned supernatural being and is *not* "in the field of the world"—the good but now-fallen creation of a loving God who still rules by his Providence—the way potentially redeemable humans are. But Satan's various locations in *Paradise Lost* complicate this objection, and even as Satan displays evil before he is cast from Heaven, so too does Milton suggest that hints of good remain in Satan as he appears in Hell, including the seemingly compassionate tears he weeps for his fallen angelic followers (see 1.605-11, 619-21), as well as his seeming potential for redemption when on Earth he remorsefully contemplates his rebellion (4.42-80), and his aforementioned time of standing "[s]tupidly good" (9.465) before Eve's beauty and innocence. As dis-



cussed before, Lewis simply does not address such passages, and Werblowsky is correct to note that in places Lewis employs dismissive humor as a rhetorically effective way to avoid difficult lines that might complicate his thesis.

Werblowsky's critique of Lewis continues amid his discussion of Satan's "degradation." Werblowsky agrees with Waldock that Milton degrades Satan both through his belittling narrative commentary and by creating a different Satan after Book 2. Nonetheless, "Milton could not help investing this 'Traitor Angel' and 'false fugitive' [2.689, 2.700] with so much courage, loyalty, and steadfastness. Not to admit these qualities is blinding oneself to one of the major features of the poem and betraying 'eyes that see not and ears that hear not'" (7). Here Werblowsky quotes Mark 8:18, Jesus's rebuke to his disciples when they misunderstand Jesus's use of metaphor—"beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod"—by taking his words literally, saying, "It is because we have no bread" (8:15-16). And Werblowsky applies Jesus's words to rebuke the Christian critic Lewis, who has misunderstood Milton's poetic creation of Satan in favor of a literalizing acceptance of Milton's degrading of that creation, a creation whose metaphorical magnificence transcends any attempts to dismiss him through clever phrases that conform to narrow doctrine.

Werblowsky also counters Lewis's "outraged" objection that Satan, living amid Heaven's "'light and love,'" would rebel against God's decree that the angels worship the Son (7; he quotes Lewis 94). Werblowsky rather calls the Father's speech "domineering, provocative, and dictatorial" (8). And responding to Lewis's paraphrasing Satan's pronouncement "Evil be thou my good" (4.110) as "Nonsense be thou my sense" (Lewis 96), Werblowsky asks if Lewis would expound Isaiah 5:20—"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil"<sup>16</sup>—as if "sinning against logic" were the Israelites' true transgression (8). Indeed, Werblowsky calls Lewis's charge that Satan is absurd "an inversion of the mock-heroic method," in which Lewis reads Satan's "passionate paradoxes" as "'personified self-contradiction[s]'" (8; he quotes Stoll, "Give" 113). Werblowsky also ponders the truly "power-

ful" moment of "Satan's agony at the sight of Adam and Eve 'Imparadis't in one anothers arms,'" which "brings home to him in a tormenting flash of insight what it means to be in hell, 'where neither joy nor love' (iv. 505-10)" (8). He then speculates, "Mr. Lewis, I suppose, would reply here too: 'What do you mean by saying that we have lost love? There is an excellent brothel round the corner.' This is worse than disgusting, it is unfair" (8; he quotes Lewis 103). Here again Werblowsky exercises his own moralizing impulse, and his reproach of Lewis's stinging zingers—albeit quoted in this last instance out of context—curiously places Lewis, regularly reproached as a stuffy moralist, on the moral defensive. Once more, Werblowsky uses the Bible to rebuke the Christian Lewis for subchristian behavior, and the implication is similarly evident: Lewis in his insistence on doctrinal rightness cannot fathom the greater spirit of Milton's great poem, or perhaps even of the Bible.

Again explicitly following Waldock, Werblowsky then equates Lewis with Milton the problematic narrator, who, long before Lewis, was "the first to start hitting Satan below the belt" (8) through "Milton's habit of first ennobling his Satan and then calling him names" and adding "nasty remark[s]" to any of Satan's "spirited and impressive appearances" (9). Significantly, Werblowsky here actually subtly differs from Waldock in an important way. Waldock's concern with Milton as narrator is Milton's moralizing Christian reflex, a reflex Lewis imitates. Werblowsky, by contrast, emphasizes Milton's and Lewis's biting nastiness and ironically unbiblical pronouncements. By way of example, Werblowsky quotes Milton's disapproving commentary following Belial's speech in hell: "Thus *Belial* with words cloath'd in reasons garb / Counsel'd ignoble ease, and peaceful sloath, / Not peace..." (2.226-28). He then states, "It may have escaped Milton [...] that to prefer to be miserable rather than not to be is sound Biblical doctrine: *Ecclesiastes* ix.4: 'for a living dog is better than a dead lion,'" asserting caustically that Milton's moralizing words here are "really worthy of Mr. Lewis" (9). Werblowsky's use of the Bible to expose where Lewis's and Milton's judgments of Satan and his fellows are

found wanting is an ingenious and fairly effective rhetorical device; but in so doing, Werblowsky indulges in the kind of dubious “cleverness” about which he earlier reproached Lewis. Werblowsky here also sets himself up as one who better understands the spirit of the Scriptures than do Milton and Lewis. It seems likely that readers not already inclined toward Werblowsky’s argument would question his presumption on this matter.

Continuing his discussion of Satan and Lewis, Werblowsky dismisses Lewis as a critical extremist. He writes: “Even the anti-Satanists have to admit that Mr. Lewis’s analysis is a critical aberration,” and he contrasts Lewis with the “far more moderate and cautious” Musgrove, who “admits” that Satan “is neither an idiot nor a nincompoop” (11). He also casts Lewis as one who is tone deaf to the undeniable truth “that a great split runs through the poem, that the *Paradise Lost* Milton meant is not quite the one that he wrote, and that this is due ‘to the radical ambiguity of what the poem asserts on the one hand, and what it compels us to feel on the other’” (13; he quotes Waldock 143). Although Lewis is “aware of” the significant “emotional disharmony in the poem,” he is nonetheless “determined to make light of and to explain away” that disharmony (13). In his critical extremism, Lewis tries to smooth over the “radical ambiguity” that every good reader, including those who sympathize with him, needs must embrace (13).

At this point Werblowsky suggests that Lewis’s critical commitment to analyzing Milton’s authorial intention—a commitment Lewis believes strengthened by his own connection to Milton as a fellow Christian (see Lewis 64)—is something that undermines Lewis’s ability to read *Paradise Lost*—the poem itself—properly. Paradoxically, Lewis’s beliefs are perhaps too similar to Milton’s to properly recognize and accept the power of Satan’s character. Milton may, Werblowsky acknowledges, “have intended all his readers to be as astute as Mr. Lewis” (13); but this intention only speaks to Milton’s—and presumably Lewis’s—disconnect with his own audience and, by extension, their reception of Satan. Indeed, wise readers recognize “that Milton’s

intention" often does not match his poetic "performance": "but here again the fact is that Milton has grossly overrated his reading public" (13). Critics who attempt to denigrate Milton's Satan inevitably resort to "preaching," a tactic that leads to "bad literary criticism" (13). Werblowsky then quotes Lewis's "excellent criterion" for "critics" (14): that "[t]he first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know *what* it is—what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used" (Lewis 1). Werblowsky ingeniously comments, "it is clear that Mr. Lewis' own conditions are not fulfilled by Satan, though of course that may be part of his wickedness. He simply does not do what he was intended to do, and is he not then, according to that very criterion, a bad piece of workmanship?" (14). Ultimately, Lewis is befuddled by Milton's Satan because he defies Lewis's commonsense critical rubric. Regrettably, Lewis insists on fitting Satan into that rubric, thus diminishing Satan's splendor.

In the end, Werblowsky believes Lewis's capacity as a reader and critic of *Paradise Lost* is thwarted both by his connection to Milton's Christianity and by his critical orthodoxies. Lewis, like Milton's moralizing narrator, feels obligated to morally degrade Satan, and in the process, despite his acknowledgement that Satan is Milton's "best drawn" character, Lewis cannot properly appreciate or celebrate Satan's grandeur. At most, Lewis can acknowledge that Milton's Satan must "be conceived as a poetic, not as a cosmic force" (Werblowsky 17). Critics like Lewis cannot appreciate Hamilton's understanding that Milton "the poet had his reasons of which the Puritan knew nothing, that the Satan created by Milton's imagination was nobler and more admirable than the devil conceived by his intellect" (Hamilton 11, quoted in Werblowsky 17). And if Lewis's knowledge of Christian doctrine and all such "backgrounds" to Milton's writings aid in one's intellectual understanding of *Paradise Lost*, one must recognize in the end "that all this necessary research ought to be regarded, in the last resort, as the *ancilla*"—not the essence—"of literary criticism" (Werblowsky 17). Ultimately, the critic's task is to emphasize "that

'rapturous expression' and the kind of heart and blood which Milton's epic gave to the traditions" (18; he quotes Martin 175). Lewis's brand of criticism, emphasizing Satan's theological and moral improprieties, needs must fall short of such artistic celebration. And if Werblowsky's notion of the essence of criticism is (to use the phrase yet once more) too simple, we may note here a legitimate pattern of concern by Lewis's respondents: that amid his primary ideological commitments, he fails to celebrate Satan's wondrous grandeur.

### Final Reflections on *A Preface*, and the Question of Hitler

The various above responses to Lewis's chapter on Satan critique Lewis both for what he wrote and what he failed to address. Remarkably, Lewis's chapter on Satan is a mere 4,200 words, a fact that helps explain Lewis's inattention to certain important topics. But if *A Preface* gives short shrift to matters of Satan's grandeur, it is because Lewis made a conscious decision not to directly engage Satan's most attractive lines. And although Lewis's allegedly narrow-minded Christianity has generally been blamed for this glaring omission, another possible explanation is that *A Preface*, an expansion of his 1941 Ballard Matthews Lectures, was written and published not merely at the height of the Milton Controversy, but also and more importantly at the height of World War II, during and in the wake of Germany's Blitz of England. Lewis and his England were living amid the very real and direct threat of a flesh-and-blood Satan figure, himself celebrated for his grandeur, his oratory, his splendid inspiration of his loyal followers. Significantly, in his 1944 Messenger Lectures celebrated Milton scholar Douglas Bush explicitly linked Satan's egotistic rhetoric and seeming "courage" to "the spirit of Hitler" (Bush 70).<sup>17</sup> And Hitler was not the only great leader of 1940s Europe who wreaked havoc on the region. Perhaps Lewis, openly critical of centralized power and the theocratic nature of the political strongmen and movements of his day,<sup>18</sup> could not bring himself to give voice to literature's best-drawn

diabolical leader. Perhaps such concerns also explain his strange omission of Coleridge, whose comparison between Satan and his contemporary Napoleon, if quoted, essentially would have necessitated the obvious parallel Lewis could have offered. And Lewis, a professed hater of “politics,”<sup>19</sup> would likely have not wanted to explicitly politicize his discussion of *Paradise Lost*, although, tellingly, *A Preface* warns against admiring any “real human being in so far as he resembles Milton’s Satan” (92). But Lewis’s omissions ought not obscure his innovative, memorably worded, and enduringly valuable commentary on Satan. In his analysis, Lewis succeeds in trenchantly exposing not only Satan’s evil but also his attendant illogicality. And if critics such as Hamilton and Werblowsky have charged Lewis with a kind of immorality for his insensitive mockery of Satan, other readers have no doubt thanked him for revealing in Satan—and indeed in themselves—the absurdity of evil.

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## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup>For discussions of the Milton Controversy, see Bergonzi and especially Leonard, *Faithful Labourers* 169-265. Prominent anti-Miltonist essays before *A Preface* include those by Leavis and Eliot. The immediate popularity of *A Preface* is evident in that by 1949 it was already in its sixth impression (Lewis iv).

<sup>3</sup>This and all parenthetical references to Lewis refer to *A Preface*.

<sup>4</sup>In his 1998 Preface to the second edition of his seminal *Surprised by Sin*, Stanley Fish writes that his book endeavors to empower Milton studies to escape “the impasse created by” rival “interpretive traditions,” the more orthodox Christian

one “stretching from Addison to C. S. Lewis and Douglas Bush” (ix), and the Satanic one begun by Blake and Shelley “and continued in our century by A. J. A. Waldock and William Empson among others” (x). More recent books that substantially engage both Lewis and Waldock include Leonard, *Naming in Paradise*; Rumrich; Forsyth; Bryson; Herman; Wittreich; Shears; Fresch; Leonard, *Faithful Labourers*; Falcone; Davies; and Urban, *Milton*. See also the very recent chapter by Bryson and Movsesian; and Urban, “Falls.”

<sup>5</sup>A second essay will discuss subsequent responses to *A Preface* to the present.

<sup>6</sup>Dryden, in *Dedication of the Aeneis*, laments, “if the Devil had not been [Milton’s] heroe instead of Adam [...]” (276).

<sup>7</sup>Lewis’s final phrase here is taken from Ben Jonson’s comedy *The Devil is an Ass* (1631).

<sup>8</sup>Various lines from *Paradise Lost* are quoted within the critical works I discuss. Other references are quoted from Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*.

<sup>9</sup>Williams, with less clever stylistics, writes that Satan “will have it that he was like Topsy and grew by himself” (xiv).

<sup>10</sup>For matters discussed in this paragraph see also Urban, “Speaking” 96-97 and 102-03 at endnotes 4, 5, and 6. John Leonard’s chapter on the history of criticism of Milton’s Satan (Leonard, *Faithful Labourers* 393-476) is invaluable. My present essay differs from Leonard’s broad discussion of the sweep of Milton criticism on Satan in my specific developed focus on Lewis and particular critics’ responses to him.

<sup>11</sup>See Urban, “Speaking” 97-101 for an analysis of early twenty-first century charges that Lewis has forestalled discussion of important critical issues.

<sup>12</sup>For this and the other passages that Stoll quotes, I have quoted from Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*.

<sup>13</sup>Hamilton also mentions Williams here, but throughout his study he primarily engages with Lewis.

<sup>14</sup>Indeed, *A Preface* actually quotes Coleridge’s 1818 comments on Hamlet and Ophelia (Lewis 119).

<sup>15</sup>Stoll does not express indignation that Waldock equally ignores how Hamilton and Musgrove also anticipate points of Waldock’s book.

<sup>16</sup>Werblowsky quotes the entire verse: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”

<sup>17</sup>Surely the pro-Satan critics Hamilton and Waldock, also writing in the mid-1940s, prompted, however perhaps unintentionally, some readers to connect Satan and Hitler when Hamilton called Satan an “astute propagandist” (21) and Waldock stated that Satan’s speech to his followers in 2.11-43 recalls the rhetoric of history’s most “able commanders” (*Paradise Lost and Its Critics* 70).

<sup>18</sup>Urban, "Contextualizing" 84-88. See specifically Lewis's 1943 essay "Equality" 17; his 1946 essay "A Reply to Professor Haldrane," 75-76; and his 1958 essay "Is Progress Possible?" 315.

<sup>19</sup>Dyer and Watson 6-7; Urban, "Contextualizing" 75-76.

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