The Heroic and Elegiac Contexts of Two Old English Laments of the Fallen Angel: Towards a Theory of Medieval Daemonization

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There is an extensive corpus of medieval poetry narrating the apocryphal legend of what in the early centuries of Christianity had come to be regarded as the original sin preceding — or, in narratological terms, "supplementing back"[1] — the biblical account of original sin. The way for medieval narratives of the fall of Lucifer had been paved by the Church Fathers' affirmation — against dualistic heresies — of God's paternity of Satan, whose early identification with Lucifer posed the question of how the first and foremost angelic creature could have been responsible for the primeval flaw in a world believed to reflect the perfection of its creator. The Lucifer legend of course does not so much solve as displace the problematics of original sin. A historical summary of that legend might fruitfully extend from an examination of the great Greek myths of filial disobedience and hubris (Phaethon, Icarus) to recent psychoanalytical theories that would account for an ambivalent father-god by the projection of unresolved conflictual emotions associated with the Oedipal phase of psychological development. For the present, however, my concern with the theological and psychoanalytical implications of the legend is limited to their potential for poetic daemonization[2], understood as authorial sympathy for, and identification with the devil. It is the realization of this potential that I propose to examine in two Old English poetic versions of this tale of an ambitious son of a jealous god.

[1] The term is from Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979) 84 *et passim*.

Wherein lay the Lucifer legend's potential for sympathetic treatment of the devil? If one may disregard the eccentric soteriology of an Origen or a Gottschalk, surely it is fair to say that orthodox medieval theology got no closer to formulating sympathy with Lucifer than when it referred to original sin as the happy fault, or *felix culpa*, thanks to which salvation history took the form it did. (To my knowledge, Adam's sin alone is referred to as *felix*, while Lucifer's sin is happy by implication only.) It has long been customary to explain Lucifer's appeal to poets in terms of fallen grandeur and of frustrated nostalgia for freedom. But freedom from constraint, or the freedom not to be contained in God's embrace, was no more attractive to the medieval poet than the Monk's story "in manere of tragedie" of Lucifer's fall from "heigh degree" was sympathetic to the pilgrims of the *Canterbury Tales*. On the other hand, the concept of "revisionary ratio," which Harold Bloom associates with the daemonized poet's imperfect repression of his precursor, might be extended to designate the artistic recuperation of what is rejected on ideological or, for our purposes, theological grounds.

That much had been intimated by St Augustine sixteen centuries before Bloom, when in book XI, chapter 18 of the *City of God* he made Lucifer into the author of those antitheses which embellish poetry and history alike, by virtue of his opposition to the creator:

> For God would never have created a man, let alone an angel, in the foreknowledge of his future evil state, if he had not known at the same time how he would put such creatures to good use, and thus enrich the course of the world history by the kind of antithesis which gives beauty to a poem. 'Antithesis' provides the most attractive figures in literary composition: the Latin equivalent is 'opposition,' or, more accurately, 'contra-position.' The Apostle Paul makes elegant use of antithesis in developing a passage in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (. . .)
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> The opposition of such contraries gives an added beauty to speech; and in the same way there is beauty in the composition of the world's history

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[2] In using the term daemonization I am of course bringing into play some of the Bloomian political, psychoanalytical and metaliterary connotations. In *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), Harold Bloom's chapter on the daemonized poet (pp. 99-114) presents him as a revisionist revolting against the sublime of his precursor, whose equivalent for us might be seen as orthodox tradition.

arising from the antithesis of contraries — a kind of eloquence in events, instead of in words.[3]

In addition to the remarkable stylistic recuperation of the counter-sublime evidenced in this passage, I would emphasize Augustine's notion that it is the confrontation between protagonist and antagonist that brings about the sequence of events we call history. This suggests a structuralist approach to history as narrative that twentieth-century morphologists could not have improved on. The notion of narrative-like history underlying Augustine's argument for the aesthetic appeal and narrative necessity of the Lucifer character is surely the conceptual correlative of history-like narrative — a concept that has recently been extended beyond the historical novel to account for the genesis of narratives that have traditionally been regarded as historical. More immediately relevant for my purpose is the analogy between poetic structure and temporal sequence that these terms imply. Narrative sequence, or story, may indeed mimic the ongoing experience of time or history; on the other hand, literary texts often belie that experience, as Augustine reminds us in the context of his already quoted discussion of the providentiality of Lucifer's sin. At one point, in book XI, chapter 14, this discussion seems to call into question a passage from the Gospel of John (8,44):

> As if in answer to a question from us, the Lord added an indication of the reason why the Devil did not 'hold fast to the truth.' He says, 'because there is no truth in him.' Now there would be truth in him, if he had stood fast to it. But the expression is unusual in form. It says, on the surface, 'He did not hold fast to the truth, because there is no truth in him.' Which seems to be saying that the absence of truth in him was the cause of his failure to stand fast, whereas the fact is that his failure to stand fast is the cause of the absence of truth. We find the same way of speaking in one of the psalms, 'I cried out because you, Lord, have listened to me,' where it seems that the psalmist should have said, 'You have listened to me, Lord, because I cried out.' In saying 'I cried out' he appears to be answering the question, 'Why did you cry out?' But in fact, the verse shows the affecting character of his cry by its effect in winning the attention of God. It is tantamount to saying 'I prove that I cried out by the fact that you listened to me.'

[3] *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. H. Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 449. Subsequent quotations from Augustine refer to this edition.

The fact that Augustine has chosen a psalm, or lyric poem, to illustrate how effectively literature may reverse the referential sequence from cause to effect strikes me as significant in the light of my comparison of *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan*, two Old English poems whose approaches to the Lucifer story diverge in accordance with their diverse poetic contexts.[4] For from now on I propose to reexamine these two Old English versions of the Lucifer legend not just in terms of the heroic and elegiac conventions with which they have long been associated, but also with a view to assessing how the different poetic structures governing those conventions may contribute towards daemonization. If the heroic *Genesis B* avails itself of history-like sequential narrative to generate sympathy for its diabolic protagonist, *Christ and Satan*, which is notorious for the liberties it takes with historical sequence, avails itself to the same effect of a number of elegiac conventions, to which it adds some unconventional structural features of its own.

A few words about the macro-context in which these two poems are placed by the manuscript tradition may precede our examination of the micro-context of Lucifer's Old English poetic complaints. *Genesis* and *Christ and Satan* initiate and conclude the verse sequence known as the Junius MS, which is conventionally dated around the year 1000. Their respective positions in that MS, which also contains the Old Testament poems known as *Exodus* and *Daniel*, suggest that the compiler had at least two kinds of sequence in mind. On the one hand we have the sequence represented by biblical and apocryphal narrative, from the establishment of paradise, which is lost through Lucifer's fault and prompting, to the regaining of paradise through Christ's successful challenge of Satan's rights. In between these two events, Old Testament history is evoked as a "careful delineation of the recurring model of the man found righteous, for whose sake God refrains from abandoning

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[4] If *Genesis A* has been excluded from the present study, in spite of its focus in lines 20–112 on the fall of the angels, it is essentially because this particular Anglo-Saxon poet escapes daemonization through his avoidance of direct speech — which would allow a temporary suppression of the authorial persona — and through his failure to focus on Lucifer as an individual, since he allows plural and singular forms to designate indifferently the totality of the fallen angels or their leader.

mankind to destruction."[5] We are therefore dealing less with biblical paraphrase than with an exegetical survey of the history of God's love for mankind. The other sequential notion that seems relevant to an understanding of the organisation of material in the Junius MS is related to the ecclesiastical calendar, a fact that may be relevant in assessing the occasion and the audience for which the MS was originally compiled.

Considered individually, the roughly 3000-line long poem *Genesis* constitutes a sequential narrative whose structural principles differ sufficiently from those of the 700-line long *Christ and Satan* to afford what for the present occasion we have agreed to call a different context within which to evaluate the speeches and deeds of Lucifer, who is called Satan in *Genesis B*, while he is virtually nameless in that part of *Christ and Satan* which tells his story — or rather, in which he himself is allowed in the words of the poet, to "voice with weary words his misery."[6] When talking about the structure of the individual poems, our critical evaluation of that structure is of course complicated, if not downright thwarted, if there is no such thing as a whole by which to measure the parts, and that is unfortunately the fate of a great deal of Anglo-Saxon narrative poetry that has come down to us. In the case of *Genesis* there is general agreement that what in lines 246 ff. appears to be a violation of the *ordo naturalis* underlying the narrative sequence, inasmuch as the narrator returns to, and repeats an earlier stage of events, is in fact attributable to the phenomenon of interpolation.

It is beyond dispute that the passage extending from lines 235 to 851, which narrates Lucifer's rebellion and fall, as well as his emissary's subsequent temptation of Adam and Eve, is of different provenance from the rest of the narrative in which it has been inserted, even though no conclusion can be reached as to whether its present format — known to scholars as The Younger Genesis or *Genesis B* — coincides with that of

[5] S.A. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: Dent, 1982) 11. Translations throughout this paper are from Bradley.

[6] Line 35. (Unless stated otherwise, quotations of Old English verse are from the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, edited by G.P. Krapp and E.V.K. Dobbie, New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-53.) Formulas introducing direct speech, in which traditional Anglo-Saxon poetic diction abounds, in this poem serve to underline the plaintive nature of Lucifer's speech, as well as to provide a link, or barrier, between the authorial voice and that of the fallen angel. The degree of daemonization which we attribute to the poet varies according to whether we interpret these formulas as transitional or as distancing devices.

the original, or whether it was itself a fragment of a larger historical poetic narrative, like the one in which it has been inserted, the Older Genesis, or *Genesis A*. For our intents and purposes, the answer to that question is of little consequence; the narrative designated as *Genesis B* gives us a version of the Lucifer legend in which the creation and fall of Adam and Eve is the logical consequence of Lucifer's rebellion and fall. This causal link had long been an integral part of a legend that reads as an interpretative narrative, born of the need to explain, or supplement back, the Eden serpent's function as trickster antagonist.[7]

It can be no coincidence that this link between the interpretative narrative of Lucifer's fall and the biblical story of man's creation is absent from *Christ and Satan*, which not only fails to treat Lucifer's fall as a preface to the creation by simply ignoring what happened in the Garden of Eden, but which seems positively to subvert any kind of chronological reading of salvation history in its rare references to that history. One of these occurs in a strange vision of Christ as a bishop, stretching forth his arms to embrace and welcome into the heavenly congregation "all those who arrived there on high and had believed in him on earth" (lines 234b-244). Since this vision is reported by Lucifer to have been his before his transgression and fall, the poet has made the vision of mankind's ultimate salvation coincide with the prelapsarian vision of he whose loss of that vision was to initiate the process of salvation history. Nowhere is the poet's undermining of temporal sequence more evident than in his only other reference to mankind, in a passage which we may fruitfully compare with the corresponding passage in *Genesis B* and which I shall have occasion to analyse below. For the way these poetic versions of the Lucifer legend begin by evoking the prelapsarian bliss of the angels may serve to illustrate the two different approaches to sequence which I shall also be associating with the heroic and lyric contexts of these works.

In lines 252-58 of *Genesis B*, the poet has used a bipartite period in which the Creator's gifts to his angelic creation are presented in such a way as to appear binding:

[7] The genesis of narratives about Lucifer may well be comparable to the development of the antagonistic character of Judas in the Gospel narratives. This is hypothesized by Kermode as a process from function, generated by supplementing back, to character, which results from the need to identify and explain the agent, and which in turn begets further narrative (see note 1 above).

> Gesett hæfde he hie swa gesæliglice,   ænne hæfde he swa
> swiðne geworhtne,
> swa mihtigne on his modgeþohte,   he let hine swa
> micles wealdan,
> hehstne to him on heofona rice,   hæfde he hine swa
> hwitne geworhtne,
> swa wynlic wæs his wæstm on heofonum   þæt him com from
> weroda drihtne,
> gelic wæs he þam leohtum steorrum.   Lof sceolde he
> drihtnes wyrcean,
> dyran sceolde he his dreamas on heofonum,   and sceolde
> his drihtne þancian
> þæs leanes þe he him on þam leohte gescerede—   þonne
> læte he his hine lange wealdan.

So blessedly had he established them, and a certain one he had made so strong and so powerful in his intellect, so much he allowed him to command, the highest after himself in the realm of the heavens, so dazzling had he made him, so winsome was his person in the heavens which came to him from the Lord of the angel multitudes — he was comparable to the incandescent stars — he ought to have done homage to the Lord, he ought to have prized his pleasures in the heavens and he ought to have thanked his Lord for the bounty he had allotted him in that existence: then he would have let him rule it in perpetuity.

Note how the accumulation of six *swa* adverbs denoting the extent of the Giver's generosity demands to be followed up by the second part of the construction, which is marked by threefold repetition of the verb *sceolde*, designating the obligation, or debt, incurred by the recipient in the heroic economy. I'm not too sure how to interpret the absence of a conjunction which would provide an explicit syntactic link between the two phases of gift giving and obligatory response; what does strike me is that it is through his very failure to oblige that Satan has created a vital hiatus between on the one hand the heroic economy, which, like prelapsarian discourse, is one of return, and therefore reflexive rather than progressive, and on the other hand a narrative economy which requires progression. As if in response to Augustine's citation, Satan has provided the antagonism which not only sets the sequential narrative in motion, but which is the very condition of its sequentiality, or narrativity. Having created the conditions of its own narrativity, the Lucifer legend progressively unfolds as a story in which gifts lead to obligation; nonobligeance leads to punitive exile, and to the renewed bestowal of

gifts on more worthy receivers; this in turn leads to vengeance, and so
forth. The structural principle of this heroic narrative is that of a
sequential progression in which each episode is born of the heroic
expectations inherent in the previous episode. Traditionally this structural
feature of the poem has been thought of as "unity of plot", and has been
attributed to the poet's use of Germanic themes like that of loyalty.[8]

How radically the so-called teleology of this text differs from that of
Christ and Satan is evident if we examine the corresponding passage in
that poem (19-32a):

Dreamas he gedelde,   duguðe and geþeode,
Adam ærest,   and þæt æðele cyn,
engla ordfruman,   þæt þe eft forwarð.
Ðuhte him on mode   þæt hit mihte swa,
þæt hie weron seolfe   swegles brytan,
wuldres waldend.   Him ðær wirse gelamp,
ða heo in helle   ham staðcledon,
an æfter oðrum,   in þæt atole scref,
þær heo brynewelme   bidan sceolden
saran sorge,   nales swegles leoht
habban in heofnum   heahgetimbrad,
ac gedufan sceolun   in ðone deopan wælm
niðær under nessas   in ðone neowlan grund,
gredige and gifre.

He first appointed those happy estates, the heavenly host and human
community, Adam and that noble specimen, the original leader of the angels,
who later came to grief. To them in their pride it seemed it could be so, that
they themselves might be the rulers of heaven, the lords of glory. In that, it
turned out the worse for them, when they set their home in hell, one after the
other, in that terrible pit where they were to endure painful wretchedness in
the fire's turbulence, not to have ethereal light in the loftily structured
heavens, but rather they were to plummet into that deep turbulence down
beneath the ground, into the abysmal gulf, those covetous and rapacious
beings.

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[8] So Michael D. Cherniss when, in his arguments for *Genesis B* as a "self-
contained and self-explanatory whole", he affirms that "this unity of plot is
reinforced by the poet's use of heroic ideals to give the story its thematic
structure. The theme of the poem is loyalty, and recurring motifs that center
about the heroic attitude toward loyalty and the related attitudes toward
vengeance, treasure, and exile serve to link the episodes in the poem securely to
one another." ("Heroic Ideals and the Moral Climate of *Genesis B*", *MLQ*, 30
(1969) 483.)

In one of the poem's rare concessions to *ordo naturalis*, this passage evokes the prelapsarian bliss of the newly-created angels; it precedes their own protracted evocation of their former state in a series of five lamentations initiated by a verb of speech in the present tense in line 34 — lamentations whose relation to one another is probably not to be thought of as strictly sequential in spite of the poet's use of such occasional linking clauses as "he spoke a second time" (line 75) or "soon they spoke again" (line 22). We see here how, even before his compression of past and present in the fallen angel's elegiac lament, the poet does not effect the separation of prelapsarian and postlapsarian events that we associate with hexaemeral narrative. No clear sequence of creation emerges from lines 19-20, which to many a critic's distress appear to lump together angels, and men, Adam and Lucifer, in God's initial creative act. Finnegan, who edited the poem in 1977, is so bothered — like many before him — by the suggestion in line 20 "that Adam was created before the angels" as to call the rhetorical figure of hysteron-proteron to the rescue; like the many prolepses detected by Finnegan in this poem, it inverts referential sequence. Line 19, on the other hand, is said to respect that sequence: *duguð*, or the heavenly company, properly precedes *geðeod*, (or *geoguð*, the emendation proposed by Finnegan) because the joys of the angels preceded mankind's pristine bliss.[9] All of this is of course perfectly true, as is the observation that, taken together, the two lines form a neat figure of chiasmus. It would be wise, however, not to overlook the fact that the poet nowhere else shows much regard for sequence, indeed, that with lyric licence he positively subverts our expectations of sequence in relation to the Lucifer legend. For whether Adam was created prior to Lucifer's fall, as in the Islamic tradition, or in consequence of that fall, as in medieval Christianity, is of no more concern to the poet than is the sequence of the fall into, and arrival in, hell (a sequence that is reversed in *staðelode* of line 25 and *gedufan* of line 30), or indeed, the sequence represented by Christ's temptation in the wilderness and His harrowing of hell, which the subsequent sections of the poem have also reversed, leading to predictable theories of multiple authorship and faulty transmission.[10] This passage might further be examined for the way in

[9] R.E. Finnegan, *Christ and Satan. A Critical Edition* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977) 92-93 and 152-53.

[10] For a useful summary of theories of multiple authorship, consult Charles R. Sleeth, *Studies in Christ and Satan* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1982) 3-26.

which it undermines the habitual dichotomy of past/future by never allowing a preterite verb form to stand in a main clause unless that clause is modified by a subordinate clause whose perfecto-present forms project the present into the past: note the use of *mihte* in line 22, of *sceolden* in line 27, and of *sceolun* in line 30. Moreover the preterite form *sceolden* qualifies a state that still endures at the time of writing, while the present form *sceolun* qualifies an action, the primeval fall, that is over at the time of writing.

So the prelapsarian history of the fallen angels is allowed no autonomous existence — not even a prefatory one — in this poetic vision whose telescopic glance coincides with that of its backward-looking diabolic protagonist. It is of course a critical commonplace to refer to the contrastive glance of the exile as one that subsumes the past under the present. Indeed, both *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan* characterize Lucifer as an outcast by resorting to the privative formulas in which Anglo-Saxon formulaic expressions of the theme of exile abound, and which constitute the stylistic equivalent of the theological notion that the devil is not so much the opposite of good as he is privation of good — or, if one prefers, privation of that good being (for the question is an ontological one) which Lucifer wilfully forsook when he freely willed a lesser good. But the different contexts which these two Old English poems create for their privative formulas suggest that privation is experienced diversely by the two diabolic protagonists.

Genesis B 390b-394 suggest that Satan experiences privation of habitat (372) and glory (392-394) as an injustice requiring an impossible vengeance:

> Hafað us god sylfa
> forswapen on þas sweartan mistas;   swa he us ne mæg
>   ænige synne gestælan,
> þæt we him on þam lande lað gefremedon,   he hæfð us
>   þeah þæs leohtes bescyrede,
> beworpen on ealra wita mæste.   Ne magon we þæs wrace gefremman,
>   gefremman,
> gcleanian him mid laðes wihte   þæt he us hafað þæs
>   leohtes bescyrede.

God himself has swept us into these black mists. Although he cannot charge us with any sin, or that we did him any harm in that country, yet he has cut us off from the light and cast us down into the severest of all punishments.

May we not take vengeance for this and pay him back with some harm, because he has cut us off from the light?

The impossible vengeance will therefore be carried out in the displaced context of sibling rivalry (involving the notion of Adam as Lucifer's brother)[11] and will require Satan's autonomous and parodic mustering of the loyal retainers under his command. Satan's drive towards autonomy is indissociable from his mimetic desire to be like the Lord. In his wish to be a creator unto himself, Satan confuses creator and creation and becomes an idol unto himself. Lordship he desires and lordship he exercises, albeit in the displaced realm of the simulacrum. This of course is one respect in which the Lucifer legend affords considerable opportunity for the daemonized poet to explore the potency and the limits of the simulacrum, but I believe I am correct in saying that we have to wait for dramatic performances of the Lucifer story towards the end of the Middle English period before we come across an English poetics drawing on the fallen angel to speculate on the limitations of mimetic art.

If *Genesis B* doesn't seem to develop the potential alignment between the artist and the rebellious father of the first mimetic fiction, can it not be said to afford a psychoanalytical reading which paves the way for such an alignment? For this Satan reacts to the privative power of paternal authority by engaging in the heroic equivalent of the Oedipal project, which for our purposes we may define with Philip K. Wion and Norman O. Brown as

> a project that sums up the basic problem of the child's life: whether he will be a passive object of fate, an appendage of others, a plaything of the world or whether he will be an active center within himself — whether he will control his own destiny with his own powers or not. The Oedipal project is a product of the conflict of ambivalence and an attempt to overcome that conflict by narcissistic inflation. The essence of the Oedipal complex is the project of becoming God — in Spinoza's formula, *causa sui* (....) By the same token, it plainly exhibits infantile narcissism perverted by the flight from death. (...) The Oedipal project is the flight from passivity, from obliteration, from

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[11] Sibling rivalry between Satan (or Satanael) and Christ was the subject of the Bogomil heresy. See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer. The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) 43-49. It is only in the wider sense of competition for the favour of a father figure, and for the privileged inheritance of the *primogenitus*, that I refer to Adam and Lucifer in terms of Sibling rivalry.

contingency; the child wants to conquer death by becoming the *father of himself*, the creator and sustainer of his own life.'[12]

But the *Genesis B* poet betrays little Marlovian sympathy for Satan's project, which is qualified throughout the prelapsarian stage of the angelic rebellion as the mistaken revolt of an inferior against a superior. One has only to notice the considerable amount of punning that occurs at this stage of the poem on the concepts of the *hearra* both as the lord (German: "der Herr") and as the superior (German: "der Höhere"). The poet has used one form or other of this epithet eleven times in just over forty lines, ranging from the narrator's definition of God as "the highest" at the outset and close of this episode (lines 260 and 300), through Satan's rejection of his "higher" lord (279, where Satan is the speaker; 263, 294 and 301, where the epithet is authorial) by seeing himself as a "higher" lord to the other angels (285, 288), and by desiring a "higher" throne (274, 282), instead of which the Most High precipitates him from his "high" throne (300). Epic heroes are of course not normally expected to subvert the hierarchical structure of the society that glorifies them.

So the case for a heroic Satan, which in my opinion has been overstated, cannot convincingly be made until after the angel's fall, when clearsighted recognition of a past disaster and of his bleak prospects for the future leads the epic hero to break from the stasis of hopelessness by decision and action. These are the (slightly modified) terms employed by Tom Shippey[13] to describe the heroes of the Finnsburg Fragment, whose reaction to their tragic predicament is not without parallel to Satan's stance in *Genesis B*. Rosemary Woolf, following Una Ellis Fermor, has reminded us that it is his permanent privative status which makes Satan into the only possible tragic hero of Christian mythology, since only he shares utter hopelessness with the heroes of classical tragedy and Germanic epic. For

> there could be no final sadness in a scheme of things where tribulation was
> restricted to this world, and was not worthy to be compared with the joys

[12] Philip K. Wion, "Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the Oedipus Complex and the Denial of Death," *Colby Library Quarterly*, 16 (1980) 200, quoting Ernest Becker and Norman O. Brown, in the latter's *Life Against Death*, 2nd ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985) 118.

[13] T. Shippey, *Old English Verse* (London: Hutchinson, 1972) 30.

of the next: in other words, there was no longer room for the great type figure of the hero defiant in defeat, defeat that was eternal and absolute. But there yet remained one exception: the devil could still be the first and greatest tragic figure because for him, as well as of course for the damned, there could be no remission of unhappiness. He could be viewed against the background of eternity as well as of time and yet arouse that sense of pity which is an essential element of tragedy.[14]

Indeed, it is consistent with orthodox theology and with heroic convention when the diabolic protagonist of *Genesis B* affirms that his resolution to persevere in his antagonism towards God will not affect his present status, which he thinks of as permanent (lines 401-403a).

This permanent privative status is also essential to the elegiac poet of *Christ and Satan*, who therefore springs a surprise on us when he questions that permanence in a crucial passage that I shall be coming back to shortly. Instead of experiencing his separation from God, which in Jungian analysis figures the psychological process of differentiation of the self from the other, as an exhilarating albeit dangerous drive towards autonomy, the fallen angel of this poem is likened to an infant whose loss of tactile, visual and auditive contact with the parental object shocks him into the apprehension of himself as a discrete entity (167-171):

> Eala þæt ic eam ealles leas   ecan dreames,
> þæt ic mid handum ne mæg   heofon geræcan,
> ne mid eagum ne mot   up locian,
> ne huru mid earum ne sceal   æfre geheran
> þære byrhtestan   beman stefne!

Alas! that I am utterly dispossessed of everlasting joy, that I may not reach up my hands to heaven nor may I look upwards with my eyes, nor indeed shall I ever hear with my ears the sound of the clearest trumpet.

Tactile imagery in fact governs large sections of the poem — as when Satan is made to measure with his hands the circumference of hell in the poem's concluding passage (lines 698-709), or when his power over damned souls is twice referred to as divine licence to snatch away the souls of God's adversaries while those of the blessed must remain forever beyond his reach (265-268 and 144b-148, a defective passage). So when Satan evokes the good times as those in which he and his fellows were
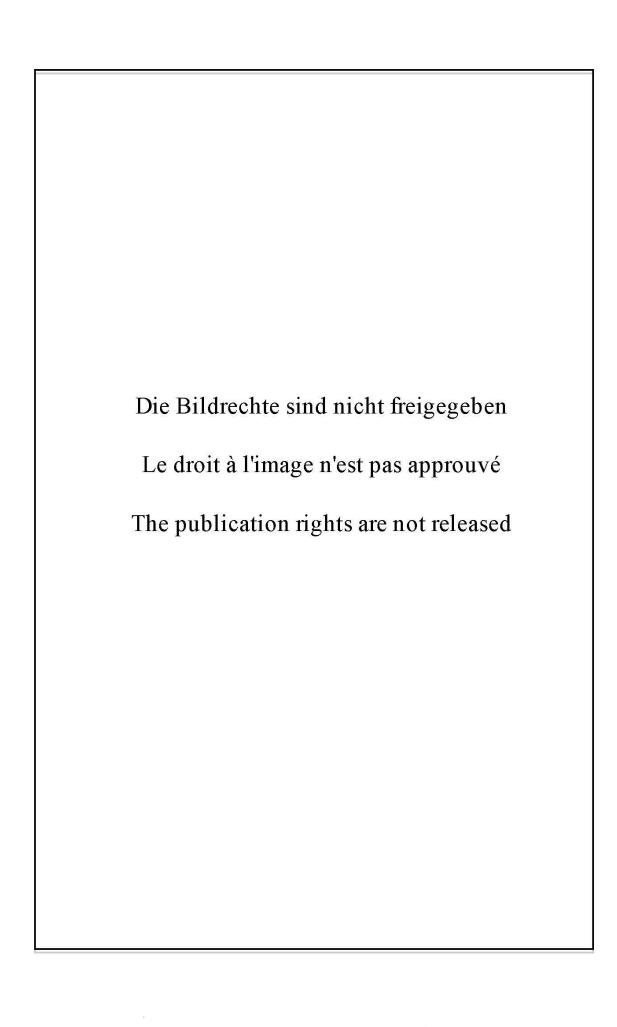
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[14] Rosemary Woolf, "The Devil in Old English Poetry," *RES*, 4 (1953), 11.

leomu ymb leofne (limbs around the beloved, 154a), the traditional metaphor of the Body of Christ acquires a new resonance. From having been coextensive with God, the speaker has put himself in the position of the Wanderer, who wistfully recalls how he "kissed and embraced his lord, laying hands and head on his knee," in a vision that transforms the past into a fiction of desire.[15] The diabolic protagonist of *Christ and Satan*, chained to his infernal habitat, cannot of course literally be said to wander paths of exile, so to what purpose does he lament that "sorrow-stricken [he] must travel the ways of exile, far-flung roads" (187b-188)? Surely it is not just another instance of the associative patterning of Old English poetry, that has been made responsible for so many collocations lacking in current relevance? Is there not a sense in which this exile, for all his plaintiveness and lack of heroic affirmation, shows us that not only a heroic Lucifer provides an opportunity for imaginative identification? Traditionally the diabolic protagonist of *Christ and Satan* has been contrasted unfavourably with his counterpart in *Genesis B* as a whiney, whimpering subject shrinks by comparison with a defiant opponent. But this opposition hardly does the daemonized poet of *Christ and Satan* justice. As the Christian authors of the Anglo-Saxon elegies didn't fail to suggest, each reader was himself a *wrecca* exiled from his heavenly father for his lifetime on earth. The Christian ways of life were paths of exile, but also, as exegetes subversively emphasized, roads of return to the fatherland, or homeland. (The subversion is with regard to elegiac structure, which precludes return.) Lucifer's tragedy is of course that he is not even allowed a forward glance, as we saw in *Genesis B*. In *Christ and Satan* 276-278, however, the poet surprisingly allows his diabolic protagonist's sketch of his future role in salvation history to culminate in a question which from a theological point of view can only be a rhetorical one:

> hwæðer us se eca æfre wille
> on heofona rice ham alefan,
> eðel to æhte, swa he ær dyde.

Will the eternal Lord ever grant us a home in the heaven-kingdom, a patrimony to possess, as he did before?

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[15] *The Wanderer*, lines 41-43.

Doesn't the very openness of the question imply an imaginative identification with the questioner, insofar as every Anglo-Saxon, even the most devout, whether Bede on his monastic deathbed or Byrhtnoth on the battlefield of his stance against the heathen, made that question his own?

The eighth, ninth and tenth centuries were no doubt not yet fully prepared to accept the consequences of this imaginative identification, which in later centuries was to invest the artist with power, glory and guilt. Yet poetic licence within the heroic and elegiac traditions has brought the poets of *Genesis B* and *Christ and Satan* one step closer to the state of affairs represented on the 1519 woodcut by Baldung Grien (Fig. 1), where we see a postlapsarian Eve crushing with her heel not the head of the diabolic serpent but the cartellino with the artist's monogram. In other words, if our Anglo-Saxon poets do not similarly advertise their status as makers of fiction, or fabricators of pleasant, seductive lies, they nevertheless, in a more modest way, exemplify poetic daemonization.