

1. Is Satan the true hero in Paradise Lost?

It would be reducing to consider Satan the only hero in Paradise Lost. He surely is a very complex figure, and the way he changes throughout the poem makes him a dynamic and interesting character.

At first he is a selfish angel that desires to free himself from God protection, that he perceives as slavery. He wants to emancipate: and here we start to know Satan's true pride and vanity. Once he reaches earth, he suffers. But nonetheless, he continues to be pure evil. He is tricky, and is willing to do anything to attain his goals of dominion. He even changes his shape, and appears in many different forms, the last one, and the most fatal, being that of a snake. We could argue he even deceives himself while he tries to force reality to his will. Earth becomes better than Paradise.

It could be said that in this matter Satan isn't different from the very humans he successfully deceives. The feature they share is indeed disobedience, deemed necessary to reach pure knowledge. Disobeying is necessary to reach another state, and this, for humans, is the consequence of the original sin. Satan's act of voluntary disobedience, with all that follows, is the cause of humanity's tendency to sin.

In my opinion, then, disobeying is the central idea in Milton. Satan's story is Humanity's story. This is what Milton wants to prove us; we disobey, we are arrogant, we are, maybe, evil. And this is truly frightening.

2. Why Does Satan decide to tempt Adam and Eve?

Satan decides to tempt Adam and Eve, with a deliberate act of disobedience to God. In fact, he wishes to extend his disobedience to the very first humans God created, Adam and Eve.

It is notable how Satan chooses to exploit Eve to complete his evil plan, and there is clearly a symbolic meaning here, since Eve strives for knowledge, she is longing for a greater meaning.

Satan, with a speech known to history for his flawless rhetorical structure, one that is based on and perfectly resembles Cicero's prose and that of the Sophists, as it is meant to use Eve's human weaknesses and desideres - that could be thought of as lust, a carnal desire that translates well in the

symbols of Milton's poetry.

Satan's speech, as previously noted, is a wonder of rhetoric, built upon Aristotelian syllogism and other classical rhetorical devices, but at the same time it lacks, like Sophist's arguments, a deeper meaning, and is relevant only as long as superficial perceptions are at play. The flattery Satan uses and the inconsistency of his words prove it.

Like Mark Antony in Julius Caesar, Satan uses logos and is able to mislead, he is in fact the utmost deceiver.

And maybe the most disturbing thing that Milton is telling us through his poetry is that sometimes humans actually enjoy being deceived when they are longing for something: they prefer Chaos of knowledge over the undisturbed peace and protection of God; they voluntarily throw themselves into Chaos to gain knowledge that is, to live, to visit "other worlds", something Adam and Eve were warned not to do.