

personal english



Character #14

The Devil

The Devil (from Greek: **διάβολος** or *diábolos*, 'the one who splits and separates') is, according to Christianity and Islam, the chief opponent of humankind. Christianity identifies the Devil (or **Satan** or **Lucifer**) with the **Serpent** who tricked Adam and Eve into eating the **forbidden fruit**, and describes him as a **fallen angel** who rebelled against God and has therefore been condemned to eternal fire at the Last Judgement. The Christian figure of Lucifer bears all the marks of the archetype of the **ὕβριστής (overreacher)**, that is, a dark hero that, like Prometheus or Ulysses, **challenges God's laws with a view to gaining knowledge**. The most beautiful and heart-rendering words the Devil has ever spoken in literature are in *Paradise Lost* by **John Milton (1674)**, where – upon seeing Adam and Eve making love in the Earthly Paradise – Lucifer experiences anguish and sorrow and makes the most tormented claim ever: '**I myself am Hell**'. Being connected with social prohibitions and taboos, since the 16th century this figure has been increasingly associated with **illicit sexuality** – traces of this can be found in the devilish and morbidly sexual traits of **vampires**, which are closely related to the devil. Also, the Devil represents the **guilty feelings that accompany sexual desire** in such poems as the famous *Skunk Hour* by American **Robert Lowell (1957)**.



Click on the first two pictures for the text and a video of **Lucifer's soliloquy in Paradise Lost**, and on the third for a commented edition of **Skunk Hour**