



Facing the Fiend: Satan as a Literary Character

By Eva Marta Baillie

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Satan is not a theological concept, but a literary character. Systematic and pastoral theology struggles with the existence of Satan and at the same time, the devil inspires authors, poets, artists, and musicians--his true nature in art seems to be creative, even though he is usually associated with destruction. If we want to believe William Blake, the true poet is of the devil's party, without knowing it. The various accounts of the devil in literature and art would certainly promote the theory that Satan himself is working on the side of the artist. While the biblical canon leaves us with many open questions about Satan, the literary canon gives more than enough definitions and interpretations of the devil. Satan is a powerful literary figure, the eternal adversary, object and subject of the story. Without any real substance, he exists in the realm of the narrative, being at the same time destroyer and creator. Satan lends a face to what we experience as evil: the absence of relation, the exile of the soul, the loss of identity, the destruction of the other and the self.

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Editorial Review

Review

If Baillie is right that 'evil cannot be understood in its being, but in its expression'--and I am entirely convinced she is--then this book itself is a splendid expression of that very phenomenon, as it lays out the various masks of a character we have long learned to loathe, but can now, under the author's thoughtful guidance, appreciate anew. --Andrew W. Hass, Reader in Religion, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Stirling

It is not often that one comes across a book written about religion that makes one's hair stand on end, but it is Eva Marta Baillie's achievement to have done so! Uniquely well placed to scour through material in several European languages, she has produced a gripping exploration of 'Satan'--liar, corrupter, and adversary, his relatives, doubles, and human counterparts in all their ambiguity--in a splendid range of narratives.

Fascinating and unnerving reading! --Ann Loades, Professor Emerita of Divinity, University of Durham and Honorary Professor of Divinity, University of St. Andrews

Even as the nature of evil in a world created and redeemed by a loving God remains a profound mystery to theology, through the pages of literature Satan wanders as a character beyond redemption. Never more so than in the blood-soaked fiction of our own time, Satan lives through the lives of others--a fearful presence brought to our attention by this haunting and timely book. --David Jasper, Professor of Literature and Theology, University of Glasgow and Distinguished Overseas Professor, Renmin University of China

About the Author

Eva Baillie is Librarian at the Goethe-Institut Glasgow. She studied Theology, Literature, and Information Studies in Germany and Scotland. In 2011, she completed her PhD at the Centre for Theology, Literature and the Arts at the University of Glasgow.

Users Review

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Ariane Gray:

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