

## CAIN

Having written *Sardanapalus*, Byron started *The Vision of Judgement* on May 7th 1821; he stopped working on it the same day, on completing (I think) its first thirty-eight stanzas. Between September 20th and October 4th 1821 he finished it. Between July 16th and September 9th he was writing *Cain* (he wrote the play's Preface on September 10th.)<sup>1</sup> The suspicion thus arises that he had to get some things worked out in his mind using the two-dimensional blank verse play as a test-bed before he could continue the multi-dimensional ottava rima poem with confidence.

Central to both works (though discreetly hidden) is the figure of a malign deity or Principle, who prefers poor verse and sycophantic prayers to harmonious music and sincerity,<sup>2</sup> and who provokes discord among his creations. He (or It) is countered by an ambiguously benign Spirit or equal Principle, who, in opposing his foe, perhaps provokes discord no less harmful. The idea of Two Principles ruling the Universe, as opposed to one God, is taken from Manicheism, which itself derives from the ancient Persian religion of Zoroaster, in which Byron had been interested for some time, perhaps since before he read Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia* in manuscript in 1814,<sup>3</sup> but certainly since that date. His interest in it would have been further fanned by the great *Critical and Historical Dictionary* of the French encyclopaedist Pierre Bayle, an eighteenth-century ironist, who, pretending to discuss heresies with horror, in fact allows them to run riot and multiply all over his voluminous footnotes.<sup>4</sup> Byron sells his Bayle in the 1816 auction,<sup>5</sup> but regrets doing so: he writes of his need for a Bayle on October 9th 1821<sup>6</sup> – after completion of both *Cain* and *The Vision*. Another important writer in this respect is the third-century Armenian Eznik of Kolb, whose paraphrase of a dualistic creation myth Byron may have helped translate.<sup>7</sup>

Byron does not reject Manicheism until *Don Juan XIII*, stanza 41, written in February 1823:

But Heaven must be diverted; its diversion  
Is sometimes truculent – but never mind –  
The World upon the whole is worth the Assertion  
(If but for comfort) that all things are kind;  
And that same devilish Doctrine of the Persian –  
Of the two principles – but leaves behind  
As many doubts as any other Doctrine  
Has ever puzzled Faith withal, or yoked her in. –

*Manfred*, written five years previous to *Cain*, is suffused with dualistic thought. There are references to a light / dark complementarity in Manfred's words at I i 29-30 ("Ye Spirits of the immortal universe! / Whom I have sought in darkness and in light") and in the speech of the Sixth Spirit at I i 108-9 ("My dwelling is the Shadow of the Night – / Why doth thy magic torture me with light?"). Arimanes, before whose throne Manfred refuses to bow, is the Zoroastrian Ahriman. In *Cain*, Lucifer is his civilised descendant, the bringer of spiritual enlightenment to the human sepulchre of clay: although in Cain's case the enlightenment also brings depression, resentment, and murder.

As neither Principle seems destined to win the battle – although Zoroastrianism does cheat, by positing a final victory for the Light – gestures such as the Incarnation and Suffering (rejected by Byron in his famous letter to Francis Hodgson)<sup>8</sup> are inefficacious. Lucifer rejects Christ's forthcoming sacrifice with contempt, at *Cain* I i 161-6 (no other character is granted foreknowledge of it). Manfred offers, without effect, to suffer for Astarte at II iv 125-7; Cain for Abel at III 510-3 (also without effect); and all *The Vision of Judgement* has to offer for the same Christian miracle is the parodic Dunking and Soaking of Bob Southey in Derwentwater. The Laureate gets wet so that George III can at least "slip into" Heaven.

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1: In June and July he also wrote *The Two Foscari*.

2: See Cochran, *The Vision of Blasphemous Judgement, Keats-Shelley Review*, Spring 1995, pp. 37-50.

3: BLJ 147-8 and nn.

4: In the notes below, I have used *Mr Bayle's Historical and Critical Dictionary*, English translation, second edition, five vols, 1735-8.

5: CMP 238.

6: BLJ VIII 238.

7: See Cochran, *Byron and the Birth of Ahrimanes, Keats-Shelley Review*, Autumn 1991, pp. 49-59.

8: BLJ II 97; quoted below, III 88n.

Also like *Manfred*, *Cain* ignores the three dramatic unities with maximum indifference; nothing could be less Unified in Place and Time than its second act, where Cain and Lucifer roam the entire universe, and all past ages. In this the play contrasts with the Racinian forms Byron experimented with in his neo-classical dramas, and aligns itself with later plays such as *Heaven and Earth* and *The Deformed Transformed*. It also places itself in opposition to the non-dramatic *Vision of Judgement*, the action of which adheres to the unities very strictly (*The Vision* can be staged with great effect).

*Cain* is, to speak in modern cinema terms, a “prequel” to *Manfred*: its protagonist stands at the start of the quest for universal knowledge, which Manfred has (so his play asserts) mastered. It is a gloomy picture, in which Man is alienated equally at the beginning and end of his Faustian journey. Byron was well-placed in history to chart such an event: discoveries in astronomy and palaeontology were starting seriously to undermine Genesis as an explanation for Everything, and he exploits them in Act II especially.

Byron takes pleasure in insisting that Lucifer had nothing to do with the Fall, and that his relationship with Cain is non-Mephistophelian: he does no tempting. As Byron wrote to Murray:

Cain is a proud man – if Lucifer promised him kingdoms &c. – it would *elate* him – the object of the demon is to *depress* him still further in his own estimation than he was before – by showing him infinite things – & his own abasement – till he falls into the frame of mind – that leads to the Catastrophe – from mere *internal* irritation – *not* premeditation or envy – of *Abel* – (which would have made him contemptible) but from rage and fury against the inadequacy of his state to his Conceptions – & which discharges itself rather against Life – and the author of Life – than the mere living. – – His subsequent remorse is the natural effect of looking on his sudden deed – had the *deed* been premeditated – his repentance would have been tardier (BLJ IX 53-4).

Byron, disingenuously, ignores here the role of Jehovah, whose rejection of Cain’s vegetable offering precipitates the catastrophe, we have to assume, with foreknowledge.

It goes without saying that there are more jokes in a single stanza of *The Vision of Judgement* than there are in all of *Manfred* and *Cain* put together.

*Cain* has been staged more frequently than *Manfred*. The three best-known productions are those by Stanislavsky, during the Russian civil war, by Grotowsky in 1960s Poland, and by John Barton in 1995-6 at the RSC. The first two failed for different reasons – the third ran for some time, but was re-written and in part re-conceived by its director from start to finish. Byron remains an amateur dramatist: he italicises beyond economical limits, and his shared pentameters are often shared for metrical reasons only. Despite his Drury Lane Committee experience, he has not learned the lesson of

Did you not speak?

When?

Now.

As I descended? (*Macbeth*, II ii 16).

*Cain* was published, with *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*, on December 19th 1821. Its manuscript, which I have not seen, is at Texas. This edition is based on four others: the first edition (John Murray 1821), and those of E.H.Coleridge (John Murray 1901), T.G.Steffan (Texas 1968), and Barry Weller (Clarendon 1991). I have taken liberties with capitalisation, verbal contractions, and with II ii 88.

## CAIN A MYSTERY

Now the Serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. – Genesis, Chapter 3rd, verse I.

### PREFACE.

The following scenes are entitled “A Mystery,” in conformity with the ancient title annexed to dramas upon similar subjects, which were styled “Mysteries, or Moralities.” The author has by no means taken the same liberties with his subject which were common formerly, as may be seen by any reader curious enough to refer to those very profane productions, whether in English, French, Italian, or Spanish. The author has endeavoured to preserve the language adapted to his characters; and where it is (and this is but rarely) taken from actual *Scripture*, he has made as little alteration, even of words, as the rhythm would permit. The reader will recollect that the book of Genesis does not state that Eve was tempted by a demon, but by “The Serpent” and that only because he was “the most subtil of all the beasts of the field.” Whatever interpretation the Rabbins and the Fathers may have put upon this, I take the words as I find them, and reply, with Bishop Watson<sup>9</sup> upon similar occasions, when the Fathers were quoted to him as Moderator in the schools of Cambridge, “Behold the Book!” – holding up the Scripture. It is to be recollected, that my present subject has nothing to do with the *New Testament*, to which no reference can be here made without anachronism. With the poems upon similar topics I have not been recently familiar. Since I was twenty, I have never read Milton, but I had read him so frequently before, that this may make little difference. Gesner’s “Death of Abel”<sup>10</sup> I have never read since I was eight years of age, at Aberdeen. The general impression of my recollection is delight; but of the contents I remember only that Cain’s wife was called Mahala, and Abel’s Thirza; in the following pages I have called them, “Adah” and “Zillah,” the earliest female names which occur in Genesis; they were those of Lamech’s wives: those of Cain and Abel are not called by their names. Whether, then, a coincidence of subject may have caused the same in expression, I know nothing, and care as little.

I am prepared to be accused of Manicheism,<sup>11</sup> or some other hard name ending in ism, which makes a formidable figure and awful sound in the eyes and ears of those who would be as much puzzled to explain the terms so bandied about, as the liberal and pious indulgers in such epithets. Against such I can defend myself, or, if necessary, I can attack in turn. “Claw for claw, as Conan said to Satan, and the devil take the shortest nails” (*Waverley*).<sup>12</sup>

The reader will please to bear in mind (what few choose to recollect) that there is no allusion to a future state in any of the books of Moses, nor indeed in the Old Testament. For a reason for this extraordinary omission he may consult “Warburton’s Divine Legation;”<sup>13</sup> whether satisfactory or not, no better has yet been assigned. I have therefore supposed it new to Cain, without I hope, any perversion of Holy Writ.

With regard to the language of Lucifer, it was difficult for me to make him talk like a clergyman upon the same subjects; but I have done what I could to restrain him within the bounds of spiritual politeness. If he disclaims having tempted Eve in the shape of the Serpent, it is only because the book of Genesis has not the most distant allusion to anything of the kind, but merely to the Serpent in his Serpentine capacity.

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**9:** Richard Watson (1737-1816) was appointed Moderator of the Schools in 1762, Regius Professor of Divinity in 1771, and Bishop of Llandaff in 1782.

**10:** Solomon Gesner’s *Death of Abel* was published in 1791, translated by Mary Collyer.

**11:** Mani was a prophet of the third century A.D. whom the Christians flayed and crucified. He maintained that two Principles governed the world, the Dark, which created matter and therefore sin, and the Light, which he identified with the Serpent in Eden, bringing illumination to the soul trapped in the body. He may have been influenced by Zoroastrianism, in which B. was interested. His beliefs were taken over by the Paulicians, the Bogomils, and the Albigensians. The couplet “Yet still between his Darkness and his Brightness, / There passed a mutual glance of great politeness” (VOJ 35, 7-8) sums it up.

**12:** This paragraph is not in the first edition. The *Waverley* reference is to a note in Chapter XXII, relating to the Irish jester Conan, who vowed never to receive a blow without returning it, and who kept his vow even when hit by Satan in Hell.

**13:** Thomas Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Deist* (1741).

*Note.*— The reader will perceive that the author has partly adopted in this poem the notion of Cuvier<sup>14</sup> that the world had been destroyed several times before the creation of man. This speculation, derived from the different strata and the bones of enormous and unknown animals found in them, is not contrary to the Mosaic account, but rather confirms it; as no human bones have yet been discovered in those strata, although those of many known animals are found near the remains of the unknown. The assertion of Lucifer, that the pre-adamite world was also peopled by rational beings much more intelligent than man, and proportionably powerful to the mammoth, &c. &c. is, of course, a poetical fiction to help him to make out his case.

I ought to add, that there is a “Tramelogedie” of Alfieri, called “Abel.” I have never read that nor any other of the posthumous works of the writer, except his Life.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

### MEN.

Adam.  
Cain.  
Abel.

### SPIRITS.

ANGEL OF THE LORD.  
Lucifer.

### WOMEN.

Eve.  
Adah.  
Zillah.

## ACT I.

SCENE 1. – The Land without Paradise. – Time, Sunrise.

*Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Adah, Zillah, offering a Sacrifice.*

Adam:	God the Eternal! Infinite! All-wise! – Who out of darkness on the deep didst make Light on the waters with a word – All Hail! Jehovah! with returning light – All Hail!	
Eve:	God! who didst name the day, and separate Morning from Night, till then divided never – Who didst divide the wave from wave, and call Part of thy work the firmament – All Hail!	5
Abel:	God! who didst call the elements into Earth, ocean, air and fire – and with the day And Night, and worlds which these illuminate, Or shadow, madest beings to enjoy them, And love both them, and thee – All Hail! All Hail!	10
Adam:	God! the Eternal parent of all things! Who didst create these best and beauteous beings,	15

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**5:** Léopold Chrétien Frédéric Dagobert (1769-1832) French anatomist, paleontologist and educationalist, better known by his *nom de plume* Georges Cuvier, was one of the first scientists boldly to investigate the fossil record, and to speculate upon what dinosaur remains might imply; his most important book on the subject was *Les ossements fossiles des quadrupèdes* (1812). See *Don Juan*, IX, 38.

To be beloved, more than all, save thee –  
 Let me love thee and them – All Hail! All Hail!  
 Zillah: Oh, God! who loving, making, blessing all,  
 Yet didst permit the Serpent to creep in,  
 And drive my father forth from Paradise, 20  
 Keep us from further evil:– Hail! All Hail!  
 Adam: Son Cain! my first-born – wherefore art thou silent?  
 Cain: Why should I speak?  
 Adam: To pray.  
 Cain: Have ye not prayed?  
 Adam: We have, most fervently.  
 Cain: And loudly: I  
 Have heard you.  
 Adam: So will God, I trust.  
 Abel: Amen! 25  
 Adam: But thou my eldest born? art silent still?  
 Cain: 'Tis better I should be so.  
 Adam: Wherefore so?  
 Cain: I've nought to ask.  
 Adam: Nor aught to thank for?  
 Cain: No.  
 Adam: Dost thou not live?  
 Cain: Must I not die?  
 Eve: Alas!  
 The fruit of our forbidden tree begins 30  
 To fall.  
 Adam: And we must gather it again.  
 Oh God! why didst thou plant the Tree of Knowledge?<sup>15</sup>  
 Cain: And wherefore plucked ye not the tree of life?  
 Ye might have then defied him.  
 Adam: Oh! my son,  
 Blaspheme not: these are Serpent's words.  
 Cain: Why not? 35  
 The Snake spoke *truth*; it *was* the Tree of Knowledge;  
 It was the Tree of Life:<sup>16</sup> knowledge is good,  
 And Life is good; and how can both be evil?  
 Eve: My boy! thou speakest as I spoke in Sin,  
 Before thy birth: let me not see renewed 40  
 My misery in thine I have repented.  
 Let me not see my offspring fall into  
 The snares beyond the walls of Paradise,  
 Which ev'n in Paradise destroyed his parents.  
 Content thee with what *is*. Had we been so, 45  
 Thou now hadst been contented. – Oh, my son!  
 Adam: Our orisons completed, let us hence,  
 Each to his task of toil – not heavy, though  
 Needful: the earth is young, and yields us kindly  
 Her fruits with little labor.  
 Eve: Cain – my son – 50  
 Behold thy father cheerful and resigned –  
 And do as he doth.

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**15:** See Genesis 2, 9.

**16:** Distinguished from the Tree of Knowledge at Genesis 2, 9. See *Manfred*, I i 12: *The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life*.

*Exeunt Adam and Eve.*

Zillah:                                    Wilt thou not, my brother?

Abel:                    Why wilt thou wear this gloom upon thy brow,  
Which can avail thee nothing, save to rouse  
The Eternal anger?

Adah:                                    My beloved Cain,                                    55  
Wilt thou frown even on me?

Cain:                                    No, Adah! no;  
I fain would be alone a little while.  
Abel, I'm sick at heart;<sup>17</sup> but it will pass;  
Precede me, brother – I will follow shortly.  
And you, too, sisters, tarry not behind;                                    60  
Your gentleness must not be harshly met:  
I'll follow you anon.

Adah:                                    If not, I will  
Return to seek you here.

Abel:                                    The peace of God  
Be on your Spirit, brother!

*Exeunt Abel, Zillah, and Adah.*

Cain: (*solus*).                                    And this is                                    65  
Life? – Toil! and wherefore should I toil? – because  
My father could not keep his place in Eden?  
What had *I* done in this? – I was unborn:  
I sought not to be born; nor love the state  
To which that birth has brought me. Why did he  
Yield to the Serpent and the woman? Or                                    70  
Yielding – why suffer? What was there in this?  
The tree planted, and why not for him?  
If not, why place him near it, where it grew  
The fairest in the centre? They have but  
One answer to all questions, “’Twas *his* will,                                    75  
And *he* is good.” How know I that? Because  
He is all-powerful, must all-good, too, follow?  
I judge but by the fruits – and they are bitter –  
Which I must feed on for a fault not mine.  
Whom have we here? – A shape like to the Angels                                    80  
Yet of a sterner and a sadder aspect  
Of spiritual essence: why do I quake?  
Why should I fear him more than other Spirits,  
Whom I see daily wave their fiery swords  
Before the gates round which I linger oft,                                    85  
In Twilight’s hour, to catch a glimpse of those  
Gardens which are my just inheritance,  
Ere the Night closes o’er the inhibited walls  
And the immortal trees which overtop  
The Cherubim-defended battlements?                                    90  
If I shrink not from these, the fire-armed Angels,  
Why should I quail from him who now approaches?  
Yet – he seems mightier far than them, nor less  
Beauteous, and yet not all as beautiful

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17: See *Macbeth*, V iii 19; or *Manfred*, I ii 113.

As he hath been, and might be: sorrow seems 95  
 Half of his immortality.<sup>18</sup> And is it  
 So? and can aught grieve save, Humanity?  
 He cometh.

*Enter Lucifer.*

Lucifer: Mortal!  
 Cain: Spirit, who art thou?  
 Lucifer: Master of Spirits.  
 Cain: And being so, canst thou  
 Leave them, and walk with dust?  
 Lucifer: I know the thoughts 100  
 Of dust, and feel for it, and with you.<sup>19</sup>  
 Cain: How!  
 You know my thoughts?  
 Lucifer: They are the thoughts of all  
 Worthy of thought; – 'tis your immortal part  
 Which speaks within you.<sup>20</sup>  
 Cain: What immortal part?  
 This has not been revealed: the Tree of Life 105  
 Was withheld from us by my father's folly,  
 While that of Knowledge, by my mother's haste,  
 Was plucked too soon; and all the fruit is Death!  
 Lucifer: They have deceived thee; thou shalt live.  
 Cain: I live,  
 But live to die; and, living, see no thing 110  
 To make Death hateful, save an innate clinging,  
 A loathsome, and yet all invincible  
 Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I  
 Despise myself, yet cannot overcome –  
 And so I live. Would I had never lived! 115  
 Lucifer: Thou livest – and must live for ever. Think not  
 The Earth, which is thine outward cov'ring, is  
 Existence – it will cease – and thou wilt be –  
 No less than thou art now.  
 Cain: No *less!* and why  
 No more?  
 Lucifer: It may be thou shalt be as we. 120  
 Cain: And ye?

**18:** Compare the description of Satan at *Paradise Lost*, I 590-4:

... his form had not yet lost  
 All her Original brightness, nor appear'd  
 Less than Arch-Angel ruind, and th'excess  
 Of Glory obscur'd ...

The description of Sathan in *TVOJ* is much more dramatic:

But bringing up the rear of this bright host  
 A Spirit of a different aspect wave  
 His wings, like thunder-clouds above some coast  
 Whose barren beach with frequent wrecks is paved –  
 His brow was like the Deep when tempest-tost –  
 Fierce and unfathomable thoughts engraved  
 Eternal wrath on his immortal face –  
 And *where* he gazed a gloom pervaded Space.

**19:** Implies Lucifer's proximity to suffering humanity to be greater than that of God.

**20:** In dualistic thought, the Spirit is imprisoned within the fleshly body. See Manfred's self-description at I ii 27:  
*My own Soul's Sepulchre.*

Lucifer: Are everlasting.

Cain: Are ye happy?

Lucifer: We're mighty.

Cain: Are ye happy?

Lucifer: No: art thou?

Cain: How should I be so? Look on me!

Lucifer: Poor clay!  
And thou pretendest to be wretched! Thou!

Cain: I am – and thou, with all thy might, what art thou? 125

Lucifer: One who aspired to be what made thee, and  
Would not have made thee what thou art.

Cain: Ah!  
Thou look'st almost a god; and –

Lucifer: I am none:<sup>21</sup>  
And having failed to be one, would be nought  
Save what I am. He conquered; let him reign! 130

Cain: Who?

Lucifer: Thy Sire's Maker – and the Earth's.

Cain: And Heaven's  
And all that in them is. So I have heard  
His Seraphs sing; and so my father saith.

Lucifer: They say – what they must sing and say,<sup>22</sup> on pain  
Of being that which I am, – and thou art – 135  
Of Spirits and of men.

Cain: And what is that?

Lucifer: Souls who dare use their immortality –  
Souls who dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in  
His everlasting face, and tell him that  
His evil is not good! If he has made, 140  
As he saith – which I know not, nor believe –  
But, if he made us – he cannot unmake:  
We are immortal! – nay, he'd *have* us so,  
That he may torture – let him! He is great –  
But, in his greatness, is no happier than 145  
We in our conflict! Goodness would not make  
Evil; and what else hath he made? But let him  
Sit on his vast and solitary throne,  
Creating worlds, to make Eternity  
Less burthensome to his immense existence 150  
And unparticipated solitude;  
Let him crowd orb on orb: he is alone  
Indefinite, Indissoluble Tyrant;  
Could he but crush himself, 'twere the best boon  
He ever granted: but let him reign on! 155  
And multiply himself in misery!  
Spirits and Men, at least we sympathise –  
And, suffering in concert, make our pangs  
Innumerable, more endurable,  
By the unbounded sympathy of all 160  
With all! But *He!* so wretched in his height,  
So restless in his wretchedness, must still  
Create, and re-create – perhaps he'll make  
One day a Son unto himself – as he

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**21:** Yet Lucifer later implies himself to be of the Two Principles.

**22:** Compare *TVOJ 2, 1-2: The Angels all were singing out of tune / And hoarse with having little else to do ...*



	Gave you a father – and if he so doth, Mark me! that Son will be a Sacrifice. <sup>23</sup>	165
Cain:	Thou speak'st to me of things which long have swum In visions through my thought: I never could Reconcile what I saw with what I heard. My father and my mother talk to me	170
	Of Serpents, and of fruits and trees: I see The gates of what they call their Paradise Guarded by fiery-sworded Cherubim, Which shut them out – and me: I feel the weight Of daily toil, and constant thought: I look	175
	Around a world where I seem nothing, with Thoughts which arise within me, as if they Could master all things – but I thought alone This misery was <i>mine</i> . My father is Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind	180
	Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk Of an eternal curse; my brother is A watching shepherd boy, who offers up The firstlings of the flock to him who bids The earth yield nothing to us without sweat;	185
	My sister Zillah sings an earlier hymn Than the birds' matins; and my Adah – my Own and beloved – she, too, understands not The mind which overwhelms me: never till Now met I aught to sympathise with me.	190
Lucifer:	'Tis well – I rather would consort with Spirits. And hadst thou not been fit by thine own soul For such companionship, I would not now Have stood before thee as I am; a Serpent Had been enough to charm ye, as before.	195
Cain:	Ah! didst <i>thou</i> tempt my mother?	
Lucifer:	I tempt none, Save with the truth: was not the Tree, the Tree Of Knowledge? and was not the Tree of Life Still fruitful? Did <i>I</i> bid her pluck them not? Did <i>I</i> plant things prohibited within	200
	The reach of beings innocent, and curious By their own innocence? I would have made ye Gods; and even He who thrust ye forth, so thrust ye Because “Ye should not eat the fruits of life, And become gods as we.” <sup>24</sup> Were those his words?	205
Cain:	They were, as I have heard from those who heard them, In thunder.	
Lucifer:	Then who was the Demon? He Who would not let ye live, or he who would Have made ye live for ever, in the joy And power of Knowledge?	
Cain:	Would they had snatched both	210

**23:** Lines 163-6 were cut from the first edition.

**24:** Lucifer alludes to the words of Eve and the Serpent at *Genesis* 3, 2-5: “And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”. His familiarity with what was said throws doubt on his seeming assertion that the Serpent was not him.

The fruits, or neither!  
 Lucifer: One is yours already,  
 The other may be still.  
 Cain: How so?  
 Lucifer: By being  
 Yourselves, in your resistance. Nothing can  
 Quench the mind, if the mind will be itself  
 And centre of surrounding things – 'tis made 215  
 To sway.<sup>25</sup>  
 Cain: But didst thou tempt my parents?  
 Lucifer: I?  
 Poor clay – what should I tempt them for, or how?  
 Cain: They say the Serpent was a Spirit.  
 Lucifer: Who  
 Saith that? It is not written so on high:  
 The proud One will not so far falsify, 220  
 Though man's vast fears and little vanity  
 Would make him cast upon the spiritual nature  
 His own low failing. The Snake *was* the Snake –  
 No more; and yet not less than those he tempted,  
 In nature being earth also – *more* in wisdom, 225  
 Since he could overcome them, and foreknew  
 The knowledge fatal to their narrow joys.  
 Think'st thou I'd take the shape of things that die?  
 Cain: But the thing had a demon?  
 Lucifer: He but woke one  
 In those he spake to with his forky tongue. 230  
 I tell thee that the Serpent was no more  
 Than a mere Serpent: ask the Cherubim  
 Who guard the tempting tree. When thousand ages  
 Have rolled o'er your dead ashes, and your seed's,  
 The seed of the then world may thus array 235  
 Their earliest fault in fable, and attribute  
 To me a shape I scorn, as I scorn all  
 That bows to him, who made things but to bend  
 Before his sullen, sole Eternity;  
 But we, who see the truth, must speak it. Thy 240  
 Fond parents listened to a creeping thing,  
 And fell. For what should Spirits tempt them? What  
 Was there to envy in the narrow bounds  
 Of Paradise, that Spirits who pervade  
 Space<sup>26</sup> – but I speak to thee of what thou know'st not, 245  
 With all thy Tree of Knowledge.  
 Cain: But thou canst not  
 Speak aught of Knowledge which I would not know,  
 And do not thirst to know, and bear a mind  
 To know.  
 Lucifer: And heart to look on?  
 Cain: Be it proved.  
 Lucifer: Darest thou look on Death?  
 Cain: He has not yet 250  
 Been seen.

**25:** 214-6 echo Satans' words at *Paradise Lost*, I, 254-5: *The mind is its own place, and in it self / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.*

**26:** Compare *TVOJ* 24, 8: And *where* he gazed a gloom pervaded Space.

Lucifer: But must be undergone.  
Cain: My father  
Says he is something dreadful, and my mother  
Weeps when he's named; and Abel lifts his eyes  
To Heaven, and Zillah casts hers to the earth,  
And sighs a prayer; and Adah looks on me, 255  
And speaks not.

Lucifer: And thou?  
Cain: Thoughts unspeakable  
Crowd in my breast to burning, when I hear  
Of this almighty Death, who is, it seems,  
Inevitable. Could I wrestle with him?  
I wrestled with the lion, when a boy, 260  
In play, till he ran roaring from my gripe.

Lucifer: It has no shape; but will absorb all things  
That bear the form of Earth-born being.

Cain: Ah!  
I thought it was a being: who could do  
Such evil things to beings save a being? 265

Lucifer: Ask the Destroyer.

Cain: Who?  
Lucifer: The Maker – Call him  
Which name thou wilt: he makes but to destroy.<sup>27</sup>

Cain: I knew not that, yet thought it, since I heard  
Of Death: although I know not what it is –  
Yet it seems horrible. I have looked out 270  
In the vast desolate Night in search of him;  
And when I saw gigantic shadows in

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**27:** For God's answer to the charge that he is simultaneously Creator and Destroyer, see *Paradise Lost*, X 616-42:

See with what heat these Dogs of Hell advance  
To waste and havoc yonder World, which I  
So fair and good created, and had still  
Kept in that state, had not the folly of Man  
Let in these wasteful Furies, who impute  
Folly to mee, so doth the Prince of Hell  
And his Adherents, that with so much ease  
I suffer them to enter and possess  
A place so heav'nly, and conniving seem  
To gratifie my scornful Enemies,  
That laugh, as if transported with som fit  
Of Passion, I to them had quitted all,  
At random yielded up to their misrule;  
And know not that I calld and drew them thither  
My Hell-hounds, to lick up the chaff and filth  
Which Mans polluting Sin with taint hath shed  
On what was pure, till crammed and gorg'd, nigh burst  
With suckt and glutted offal, at one sling  
Of thy victorious Arm, well-pleasing Son,  
Both Sin, and Death, and yawning Grave at last  
Through Chaos hurld, obstruct the mouth of Hell  
For ever, and seal up his ravenous Jaws.  
Then Heav'n and Earth renewd shall be made pure  
To sanctitie that shall receive no staine:  
Till then the Curse pronounc't on both precedes.  
He ended, and the heav'nly Audience loud  
Sung Halleluiah ...

The umbrage of the walls of Eden, checkered  
 By the far-flashing of the Cherubs' swords,  
 I watched for what I thought his coming; for 275  
 With fear rose longing in my heart to know  
 What 'twas which shook us all – but nothing came.  
 And then I turned my wary eyes from off  
 Our native and forbidden Paradise,  
 Up to the lights above us, in the azure, 280  
 Which are so beautiful: shall they, too, die?  
 Lucifer: Perhaps – but long outlive both thine and thee.  
 Cain: I'm glad of that: I would not have them die –  
 They are so lovely. What is Death? I fear,  
 I feel, it is a dreadful thing; but what, 285  
 I cannot compass: 'tis denounced against us,  
 Both them who sinned and sinned not, as an ill –  
 What ill?  
 Lucifer: To be resolved into the earth.  
 Cain: But shall I know it?  
 Lucifer: As I know not Death,  
 I cannot answer.  
 Cain: Were I quiet earth, 290  
 That were no evil: would I ne'er had been  
 Aught else but dust!  
 Lucifer: That is a *grovelling* wish,  
 Less than thy father's – for he wished to know!  
 Cain: But not to live – or wherefore plucked he not  
 The life-tree?  
 Lucifer: He was hindered.  
 Cain: Deadly error! 295  
 Not to snatch first that fruit – but ere he plucked  
 The knowledge, he was ignorant of Death.  
 Alas! I scarcely now know what it is,  
 And yet I fear it – fear I know not what!  
 Lucifer: And I, who know all things, fear nothing; see 300  
 What is true knowledge.  
 Cain: Wilt thou teach me all?  
 Lucifer: Aye, upon one condition.  
 Cain: Name it.  
 Lucifer: That  
 Thou dost fall down and worship me – thy Lord.  
 Cain: Thou art not the Lord my father worships.  
 Lucifer: No.  
 Cain: His equal?  
 Lucifer: No; – I've nought in common with him! 305  
 Nor would: I would be aught above – beneath –  
 Aught save a sharer or a servant of  
 His power. I dwell apart; but I am great –  
 Many there are who worship me, and more  
 Who shall – be thou amongst the first.  
 Cain: I never 310  
 As yet have bowed unto my father's God.  
 Although my brother Abel oft implores  
 That I would join with him in sacrifice –  
 Why should I bow to thee?  
 Lucifer: Hast thou ne'er bowed  
 To him?

Cain:                   Have I not said it? – need I say it?                   315  
                           Could not thy mighty knowledge teach thee that?  
 Lucifer:               He who bows not to him has bowed to me.  
 Cain:                   But I will bend to neither.  
 Lucifer:                                Ne'er the less,  
                           Thou art my worshipper; not worshipping  
                           Him makes thee mine the same.

Cain:    And what is that?                   320  
 Lucifer:               Thou'lt know here – and hereafter.  
 Cain:    Let me but  
                           Be taught the mystery of my being.  
 Lucifer:    Follow  
                           Where I will lead thee.

Cain:    But I must retire  
                           To till the earth – for I had promised –  
 Lucifer:    What?  
 Cain:                    To cull some first-fruits.  
 Lucifer:    Why?  
 Cain:    To offer up                   325  
                           With Abel on an altar.  
 Lucifer:    Said'st thou not  
                           Thou ne'er hadst bent to him who made thee?  
 Cain:    Yes –  
                           But Abel's earnest prayer has wrought upon me;  
                           The offering is more his than mine – and Adah –  
 Lucifer:                Why dost thou hesitate?  
 Cain:    She is my sister,                   330  
                           Born on the same day, of the same womb; and  
                           She wrung from me, with tears, this promise; and  
                           Rather than see her weep, I would, methinks,  
                           Bear all – and worship aught.

Lucifer:    Then follow me!  
 Cain:                    I will.

*Enter Adah.*

Adah:                   My brother, I have come for thee;                   335  
                           It is our hour of rest and joy – and we  
                           Have less without thee. Thou hast laboured not  
                           This morn; but I have done thy task: the fruits  
                           Are ripe, and glowing as the light which ripens:  
                           Come away.

Cain:    See'st thou not?  
 Adah:    I see an Angels;                   340  
                           We have seen many: will he share our hour  
                           Of rest? – he is welcome.

Cain:    But he is not like  
                           The Angels we have seen.

Adah:    Are there, then, others?  
                           But he is welcome, as they were: they deigned  
                           To be our guest – will he?

Cain (*to Lucifer*):                                Wilt thou?  
 Lucifer:    I ask                   345  
                           Thee to be mine.

Cain:    I must away with him.  
 Adah:                    And leave us?

Cain: Aye.  
Adah: And *me*?  
Cain: Beloved Adah!  
Adah: Let me go with thee.  
Lucifer: No, she must not.  
Adah: Who  
Art thou that steppest between heart and heart?  
Cain: He is a God.  
Adah: How know'st thou?  
Cain: He speaks like 350  
A God.  
Adah: So did the Serpent, and it lied.  
Lucifer: Thou errest, Adah! – was not the Tree that  
Of Knowledge?  
Adah: Aye – to our eternal sorrow.  
Lucifer: And yet that grief is knowledge – so he lied not:  
And if he did betray you, 'twas with Truth; 355  
And Truth in its own essence cannot be  
But good.  
Adah: But all we know of it has gathered  
Evil on ill; expulsion from our home,  
And dread, and toil, and sweat, and heaviness;  
Remorse of that which was – and hope of that 360  
Which cometh not. Cain! walk not with this Spirit.  
Bear with what we have borne, and love me – I  
Love thee.  
Lucifer: More than thy mother, and thy sire?  
Adah: I do. Is that a sin too?  
Lucifer: No, not yet;  
It one day will be in your children.  
Adah: What! 365  
Must not my daughter love her brother Enoch?<sup>28</sup>  
Lucifer: Not as thou lovest Cain.  
Adah: Oh, my God!  
Shall they not love and bring forth things that love  
Out of their love? have they not drawn their milk  
Out of this bosom? was not he, their father, 370  
Born of the same sole womb, in the same hour  
With me?<sup>29</sup> did we not love each other? and  
In multiplying our being multiply  
Things which will love each other as we love  
Them? – And as I love thee, my Cain! go not 375  
Forth with this Spirit; he is not of ours.  
Lucifer: The Sin I speak of is not of my making,  
And cannot be a Sin in you – whate'er  
It seem in those who will replace ye in  
Mortality.  
Adah: What is the Sin which is not 380  
Sin in itself? Can circumstance make Sin  
Or virtue? – if it doth, we are the slaves  
Of –  
Lucifer: Higher things than ye are slaves: and higher

**28:** See Genesis 4, 17: *And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch ...*

**29:** B., with mock-disingenuousness, makes the innocent Adah praise sibling incest, giving it a pseudo-Biblical authority, deriving in fact from Bayle's *Dictionary*.

Than them or ye would be so, did they not  
 Prefer an independency of torture 385  
 To the smooth agonies of adulation,  
 In hymns and harpings, and self-seeking prayers,<sup>30</sup>  
 To that which is omnipotent, because  
 It is omnipotent, and not from love,  
 But terror and self-hope.

Adah: Omnipotence 390  
 Must be all goodness.

Lucifer: Was it so in Eden?  
 Adah: Fiend! tempt me not with beauty; thou art fairer  
 Than was the Serpent, and as false.

Lucifer: As true.  
 Ask Eve, your mother: bears she not the knowledge  
 Of good and evil?

Adah: Oh, my mother! Thou 395  
 Hast plucked a fruit more fatal to thine offspring  
 Than to thyself; thou at the least hast passed  
 Thy youth in Paradise, in innocent  
 And happy intercourse with happy Spirits:  
 But we, thy children, ignorant of Eden, 400  
 Are girt about by demons, who assume  
 The words of God, and tempt us with our own  
 Dissatisfied and curious thoughts – as thou  
 Wert worked on by the Snake, in thy most flushed  
 And heedless, harmless wantonness of bliss. 405  
 I cannot answer this immortal thing  
 Which stands before me; I cannot abhor him;  
 I look upon him with a pleasing fear,  
 And yet I fly not from him: in his eye  
 There is a fastening attraction which 410  
 Fixes my fluttering eyes on his; my heart  
 Beats quick; he awes me, and yet draws me near,  
 Nearer and nearer – Cain – Cain – save me from him!

Cain: What dreads my Adah? This is no ill Spirit.  
 Adah: He is not God – nor God's: I have beheld 415  
 The Cherubs and the Seraphs; he looks not  
 Like them.

Cain: But there are Spirits loftier still –  
 The Archangels.

Lucifer: And still loftier than the Archangels.  
 Adah: Aye – but not blessed.

Lucifer: If the blessedness  
 Consists in slavery – no.

Adah: I've heard it said, 420  
 The Seraphs *love most* – Cherubim *know most* –  
 And this should be a Cherub – since he loves not.

Lucifer: And if the higher knowledge quenches love,  
 What must *he be* you cannot love when known?  
 Since the all-knowing Cherubim love least, 425  
 The Seraphs' love can be but ignorance:  
 That they are not compatible, the doom  
 Of thy fond parents, for their daring, proves.  
 Choose betwixt Love and Knowledge – since there is

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30: We have only the Devil's word, both here and in *TVOJ*, that Heavenly music is tuneless and insincere.

No other choice: your sire hath chosen already: 430  
His worship is but fear.

Adah: Oh, Cain! choose Love.  
Cain: For thee, my Adah, I chose not – It was  
Born with me – but I love nought else.

Adah: Our parents?  
Cain: Did they love us when they snatched from the Tree  
That which hath driven us all from Paradise? 435

Adah: We were not born then – and if we had been,  
Should we not love them – and our children, Cain?

Cain: My little Enoch! and his lisping sister!  
Could I but deem them happy, I would half  
Forget – but it can never be forgotten 440  
Through thrice a thousand generations! never  
Shall men love the remembrance of the man  
Who sowed the seed of evil and mankind  
In the same hour! They plucked the tree of science  
And Sin – and, not content with their own sorrow, 445  
Begot *me* – *thee* – and all the few that are,  
And all the unnumbered and innumerable  
Multitudes, millions, myriads, which may be,  
To inherit agonies accumulated  
By ages!—and *I* must be sire of such things! 450  
Thy beauty and thy love – my love and joy,  
The rapturous moment and the placid hour,  
All we love in our children and each other,  
But lead them and ourselves through many years  
Of Sin and pain – or few, but still of sorrow, 455  
Interchecked with an instant of brief pleasure,  
To Death – the unknown! Methinks the Tree of Knowledge  
Hath not fulfilled its promise – if they sinned,  
At least they ought to have known all things that are  
Of knowledge – and the mystery of Death. 460  
What do they know? – that they are miserable.  
What need of snakes and fruits to teach us that?

Adah: I am not wretched, Cain, and if thou  
Wert happy –

Cain: Be thou happy, then, alone –  
I will have nought to do with happiness, 465  
Which humbles me and mine.

Adah: Alone I could not,  
Nor *would* be happy; but with those around us  
I think I could be so, despite of Death,  
Which, as I know it not, I dread not, though  
It seems an awful shadow – if I may 470  
Judge from what I have heard.

Lucifer: And thou couldst not  
*Alone*, thou say'st, be happy?

Adah: Alone! Oh, my God!  
Who could be happy and alone, or good?  
To me my solitude seems Sin; unless  
When I think how soon I shall see my brother, 475  
His brother, and our children, and our parents.

Lucifer: Yet thy God is alone; and is he happy?  
Lonely, and good?

Adah: He is not so; he hath



The Angels, and the mortals to make happy,  
 And thus becomes so in diffusing joy. 480  
 Lucifer: What else can joy be, but the spreading joy?  
 Ask of your sire, the exile fresh from Eden;  
 Or of his first-born son: ask your own heart;  
 It is not tranquil.  
 Adah: Alas! no! and you –  
 Are you of Heaven?  
 Lucifer: If I'm not, enquire 485  
 The cause of this all-spreading happiness  
 (Which you proclaim) of the all-great and good  
 Maker of life and living things; it is  
 His secret, and he keeps it. *We* must bear,  
 And some of us resist – and both in vain, 490  
 His Seraphs say: but it is worth the trial,  
 Since better may not be without: there is  
 A wisdom in the Spirit, which directs  
 To right, as in the dim blue air the eye  
 Of you, young mortals, lights at once upon 495  
 The star which watches, welcoming the morn.  
 Adah: It is a beautiful star; I love it for  
 Its beauty.  
 Lucifer: And why not adore?<sup>31</sup>  
 Adah: Our father  
 Adores the Invisible only.  
 Lucifer: But the symbols  
 Of the Invisible are the loveliest 500  
 Of what is visible; and yon bright star  
 Is leader of the host of Heaven.  
 Adah: Our father  
 Saith that he has beheld the God himself  
 Who made him and our mother.  
 Lucifer: Hast *thou* seen him?  
 Adah: Yes – in his works.  
 Lucifer: But in his being?  
 Adah: No – 505  
 Save in my father, who is God's own image;  
 Or in his Angels, who are like to thee –  
 And brighter, yet less beautiful and powerful  
 In seeming: as the silent sunny noon,  
 All light, they look upon us; but thou seem'st 510  
 Like an ethereal Night, where long white clouds  
 Streak the deep purple, and unnumbered stars  
 Spangle the wonderful mysterious vault  
 With things that look as if they would be suns;  
 So beautiful, unnumbered, and endearing, 515  
 Not dazzling, and yet drawing us to them,  
 They fill my eyes with tears, and so dost thou.  
 Thou seems't unhappy: do not make us so,  
 And I will weep for thee.  
 Lucifer: Alas! those tears!  
 Couldst thou but know what oceans will be shed – 520  
 Adah: By me?

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**31:** Lucifer was once visible as the Morning Star: See Isaiah 14, 12: *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!*

Lucifer: By all.  
Adah: What all?  
Lucifer: The million millions –  
The myriad myriads – the all-peopled Earth –  
The unpeopled Earth – and the o'er peopled Hell,  
Of which thy bosom is the germ.

Adah: O Cain!  
This Spirit curseth us.

Cain: Let him say on; 525  
Him will I follow.

Adah: Whither?  
Lucifer: To a place  
Whence he shall come back to thee in an hour;  
But in that hour see things of many days.

Adah: How can that be?  
Lucifer: Did not your Maker make 530  
Out of old worlds this new one in few days?  
And cannot I, who aided in this work,  
Show in an hour what he hath made in many,  
Or hath destroyed in few?

Cain: Lead on.  
Adah: Will he,  
In sooth, return within an hour?

Lucifer: He shall. 535  
With us acts are exempt from time, and we  
Can crowd Eternity into an hour,<sup>32</sup>  
Or stretch an hour into Eternity:  
We breathe not by a mortal measurement –  
But that's a mystery. Cain, come on with me.

Adah: Will he return?  
Lucifer: Aye, woman! he alone 540  
Of mortals from that place (the first and last  
Who shall return, save ONE) shall come back to thee,  
To make that silent and expectant world  
As populous as this: at present there  
Are few inhabitants.

Adah: Where dwellest thou? 545  
Lucifer: Throughout all space. Where should I dwell? Where are  
Thy God or Gods – there am I: all things are  
Divided with me: Life and Death – and Time –  
Eternity – and Heaven and Earth – and that  
Which is not Heaven or Earth, but peopled with 550  
Those who once peopled or shall people both –  
These are my realms! so that I do divide  
*His*, and possess a kingdom which is not  
*His*. If I were not that which I have said,  
Could I stand here? His Angels are within 555  
Your vision.

Adah: So they were when the fair Serpent  
Spoke with our mother first.

Lucifer: Cain! thou hast heard.  
If thou dost long for knowledge, I can satiate  
That thirst nor ask thee to partake of fruits

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32: Compare TVOJ 56, 7-8: The Sun takes up some years for every ray / To reach its Goal – the Devil not half a day. –

Which shall deprive thee of a single good  
The Conqueror has left thee. Follow me.  
Cain: Spirit, I have said it.

*Exeunt LUCIFER and Cain.*

Adah (*follows, exclaiming*): Cain! my brother! Cain!

## ACT II.

### SCENE 1. The Abyss of Space.<sup>33</sup>

Cain: I tread on air, and sink not – yet I fear  
To sink.

Lucifer: Have faith in me, and thou shalt be  
Borne on the air,<sup>34</sup> of which I am the Prince.<sup>35</sup>

Cain: Can I do so without impiety?

Lucifer: Believe – and sink not! doubt – and perish! Thus 5  
Would run the edict of the other God,  
Who names me Demon to his Angels; they  
Echo the sound to miserable things,  
Which, knowing nought beyond their shallow senses,  
Worship the word which strikes their ear, and deem 10  
Evil or good what is proclaimed to them  
In their abasement. I will have none such:  
Worship or worship not, thou shalt behold  
The worlds beyond thy little world, nor be  
Amerced<sup>36</sup> for doubts beyond thy little life, 15  
With torture of my dooming. There will come  
An hour, when, tossed upon some water-drops,  
A man shall say to a man, “Believe in me,  
And walk the waters;” and the man shall walk  
The billows and be safe.<sup>37</sup> I will not say, 20  
Believe in me, as a conditional creed  
To save thee; but fly with me o’er the gulph  
Of space an equal flight, and I will show  
What thou dar’st not deny, – the history  
Of past – and present, and of future worlds. 25

Cain: Oh God! or Demon! or whate’er thou art,<sup>38</sup>  
Is yon our Earth?

Lucifer: Dost thou not recognise  
The dust which formed your father?

Cain: Can it be?  
Yon small blue circle, swinging in far ether,  
With an inferior circlet purple still, 30  
Which looks like that which lit our earthly Nights?  
Is this our Paradise? Where are its walls,  
And they who guard them?

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**33:** B.’s letter to Moore of Sep 19, 1821, introduces the second act interestingly: “... I have sent him [Murray] another tragedy – “Cain” by name – making three in MS. now in his hands, or in the printer’s. It is in the Manfred, metaphysical style, and full of some Titanic declamation; - Lucifer being one of the dram. pers., who takes Cain a voyage among the stars, and, afterwards to “Hades,” where he shows him the phantoms of a former world, and its inhabitants. I have gone upon the notion of Cuvier, that the world has been destroyed three or four times, and was inhabited by mammoths, behemoths, and what not; but *not* by man till the Mosaic period, as, indeed, is proved by the strata of bones found; – those of all unknown animals, and known, being dug out, but none of mankind. I have, therefore, supposed Cain to be shown in the rational Preadamites, beings endowed with a higher intelligence than man, but totally unlike him in form, and with much greater strength of mind and person. You may suppose the small talk which takes place between him and Lucifer upon these matters is not quite canonical.” (BLJ VIII 215-6: quotation continued below, at n).

**34:** Newman inverts this relationship, between human soul and supernatural guide, in *The Dream of Gerontius*.

**35:** See *TVOJ* 40, 1, quoting *Ephesians* 2, 2.

**36:** Punished. See *Romeo and Juliet*, III i 187.

**37:** How Lucifer can anticipate the events of Matthew 14 24-32 is not clear; but he does.

**38:** Compare Lamartine, *Méditations Poétiques* (a passage addressed to B.): *Toi, dont le monde encore ignore le vrai nom, / Esprit mystérieux, mortel, ange ou démon ...* See BLJ VII 111-2 and 127.

Lucifer: Point me out the site  
Of Paradise.

Cain: How should I? As we move  
Like sunbeams onward, it grows small and smaller, 35  
And as it waxes little, and then less,  
Gathers a halo round it, like the light  
Which shone the roundest of the stars, when I  
Beheld them from the skirts of Paradise:  
Methinks they both, as we recede from them, 40  
Appear to join the innumerable stars  
Which are around us; and, as we move on,  
Increase their myriads.

Lucifer: And if there should be  
Worlds greater than thine own – inhabited  
By greater things – and they themselves far more 45  
In number than the dust of thy dull Earth,  
Though multiplied to animated atoms,  
All living – and all doomed to Death – and wretched,  
What wouldst thou think?

Cain: I should be proud of thought  
Which knew such things.

Lucifer: But if that high thought were 50  
Linked to a servile mass of matter – and,  
Knowing such things, aspiring to such things,  
And science still beyond them, were chained down  
To the most gross and petty paltry wants,  
All foul and fulsome – and the very best 55  
Of thine enjoyments a sweet degradation,  
A most enervating and filthy cheat  
To lure thee on to the renewal of  
Fresh souls and bodies, all foredoomed to be  
As frail, and few so happy.

Cain: Spirit! I 60  
Know nought of Death, save as a dreadful thing  
Of which I've heard my parents speak, as of  
A hideous heritage I owe to them  
No less than life – a heritage not happy,  
If I may judge, till now. But, Spirit! If 65  
It be as thou hast said (and I within  
Feel the prophetic torture of its truth),  
Here let me die: for to give birth to those  
Who can but suffer many years, and die –  
Methinks is merely propagating Death, 70  
And multiplying murder.

Lucifer: Thou canst not  
All die – there is what must survive.

Cain: The Other  
Spake not of this unto my father, when  
He shut him forth from Paradise, with Death  
Written upon his forehead. But at least 75  
Let what is mortal of me perish, that  
I may be in the rest as Angels are.

Lucifer: I am angelic: wouldst thou be as I am?

Cain: I know not what thou art: I see thy power,  
And see thou show'st me things beyond *my* power, 80  
Beyond all power of my born faculties,

	Although inferior still to my desires And my conceptions.	
Lucifer:	What are they which dwell So humbly in their pride, as to sojourn With worms in clay?	
Cain:	And what art thou who dwellest So haughtily in Spirit, and canst range Nature and immortality – and yet Seem’st sorrowful?	85
Lucifer:	I seem that which I am; <sup>39</sup> And therefore do I ask of thee, if thou Wouldst be immortal?	
Cain:	Thou hast said, I must be Immortal in despite of me. I knew not This until lately – but since it must be, Let me, or happy or unhappy, learn To anticipate my immortality.	90
Lucifer:	Thou didst before I came upon thee.	
Cain:	How?	95
Lucifer:	By suffering.	
Cain:	And must torture be immortal?	
Lucifer:	We and thy sons will try. But now, behold! Is it not glorious?	
Cain:	Oh, thou beautiful And unimaginable ether! and Ye multiplying masses of increased And still-increasing lights! what are ye? what Is this blue wilderness of interminable Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden? Is your course measured for ye? Or do ye Sweep on in your unbounded revelry Through an aërial universe of endless Expansion – at which my soul aches to think – Intoxicated with Eternity? Oh God! Oh Gods! or whatsoe’er ye are! How beautiful ye are! how beautiful Your works, or accidents, or whatsoe’er They may be! Let me die, as atoms die, (If that they die), or know ye in your might And knowledge! My thoughts are not in this hour Unworthy what I see, though my dust is; Spirit! let me expire, or see them nearer.	100
Lucifer:	Art thou not nearer? look back to thine Earth!	
Cain:	Where is it? I see nothing save a mass Of most innumerable lights.	105
Lucifer:	Look there!	120
Cain:	I cannot see it.	
Lucifer:	Yet it sparkles still.	
Cain:	That yonder?	
Lucifer:	Yea.	
Cain:	And wilt thou tell me so? Why, I have seen the fire-flies and fire-worms Sprinkle the dusky groves and the green banks	115

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39: Unlike Iago and Viola; Lucifer reverses their *I am not what I am* (*Othello* I i 66; *Twelfth Night* III i 137).

In the dim twilight, brighter than yon world 125  
Which bears them.

Lucifer: Thou hast seen both worms and worlds,  
Each bright and sparkling – what dost think of them?

Cain: That they are beautiful in their own sphere,  
And that the Night, which makes both beautiful,  
The little shining fire-fly in its flight, 130  
And the immortal star in its great course,  
Must both be guided.

Lucifer: But by whom or what?

Cain: Show me.

Lucifer: Dar'st thou behold?

Cain: How know I what  
I *dare* behold? As yet, thou hast shown naught  
I dare not gaze on further.

Lucifer: On, then, with me. 135  
Wouldst thou behold things mortal or immortal?

Cain: Why, what are things?

Lucifer: *Both* partly: but what doth  
Sit next thy heart?

Cain: The things I see.

Lucifer: But what  
*Sate* nearest it?

Cain: The things I have not seen,  
Nor ever shall – the mysteries of Death. 140

Lucifer: What, if I show to thee things which have died,  
As I have shown thee much which cannot die?

Cain: Do so.

Lucifer: Away, then! on our mighty wings!

Cain: Oh! how we cleave the blue! The stars fade from us!  
The Earth! where is my Earth? Let me look on it, 145  
For I was made of it.

Lucifer: 'Tis now beyond thee,  
Less, in the universe, than thou in it;  
Yet deem not that thou canst escape it; thou  
Shalt soon return to Earth, and all its dust:  
'Tis part of thy Eternity, and mine. 150

Cain: Where dost thou lead me?

Lucifer: To what was before thee!  
The phantasm of the world; of which thy world  
Is but the wreck.

Cain: What! is it not then new?

Lucifer: No more than life is; and that was ere thou  
Or *I* were, or the things which seem to us 155  
Greater than either: many things will have  
No end; and some, which would pretend to have  
Had no beginning, have had one as mean  
As thou; and mightier things have been extinct  
To make way for much meaner than we can 160  
Surmise; for *moments* only and the *space*  
Have been and must be all *unchangeable*.  
But changes make not Death, except to clay;  
But thou art clay – and canst but comprehend  
That which was clay, and such thou shalt behold.

Cain: Clay – Spirit – what thou wilt – I can survey.

Lucifer: Away, then!

Cain:                               But the lights fade from me fast,  
And some till now grew larger as we approached,  
And wore the look of worlds.

Lucifer:                               And such they are.

Cain:                               And Edens in them?

Lucifer:                               It may be.

Cain:                               And men?                               170

Lucifer:                               Yea, or things higher.

Cain:                               Aye! and Serpents too?

Lucifer:                               Wouldst thou have men without them? must no reptiles  
Breathe, save the erect ones?

Cain:                               How the lights recede!  
Where fly we?

Lucifer:                               To the world of phantoms, which  
Are beings past, and shadows still to come.                               175

Cain:                               But it grows dark, and dark – the stars are gone!

Lucifer:                               And yet thou seest.

Cain:                               'Tis a fearful light!  
No sun – no moon – no lights innumerable –  
The very blue of the empurpled Night  
Fades to a dreary twilight – yet I see                               180  
Huge dusky masses; but unlike the worlds  
We were approaching, which, begirt with light,  
Seemed full of life even when their atmosphere  
Of light gave way, and showed them taking shapes  
Unequal, of deep valleys and vast mountains;                               185  
And some emitting sparks, and some displaying  
Enormous liquid plains, and some begirt  
With luminous belts, and floating moons, which took,  
Like them, the features of fair Earth – instead,  
All here seems dark and dreadful.

Lucifer:                               But distinct.                               190

Cain:                               Thou seekest to behold Death, and dead things?  
I seek it not; but as I know there are  
Such, and that my sire's Sin makes him and me,  
And all that we inherit,<sup>40</sup> liable  
To such, I would behold, at once, what I                               195  
Must one day see perforce.

Lucifer:                               Behold!

Cain:                               'Tis darkness!

Lucifer:                               And so it shall be ever – but we will  
Unfold its gates!

Cain:                               Enormous vapours roll  
Apart – what's this?

Lucifer:                               Enter!

Cain:                               Can I return?

Lucifer:                               Return! be sure: how else should Death be peopled?                               200  
Its present realm is thin to what it will be,  
Through thee and thine.

Cain:                               The clouds still open wide  
And wider, and make widening circles round us!

Lucifer:                               Advance!

Cain:                               And thou!

Lucifer:                               Fear not – without me thou



Couldst not have gone beyond thy world. On! on!<sup>41</sup>

205

*They disappear through the clouds.*

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**41:** Echoes Mephistopheles: *Vorbei! vorbei!* (Goethe, *Faust*, line 4404).

SCENE II. – Hades.  
*Enter LUCIFER and Cain.*

Cain: How silent and how vast are these dim worlds!  
For they seem more than one, and yet more peopled  
Than the huge brilliant luminous orbs which swung  
So thickly in the upper air, that I  
Had deemed them rather the bright populace 5  
Of some all unimaginable Heaven,  
Than things to be inhabited themselves,  
But that on drawing near them I beheld  
Their swelling into palpable immensity  
Of matter, which seemed made for life to dwell on, 10  
Rather than life itself. But here, all is  
So shadowy, and so full of twilight, that  
It speaks of a day past.

Lucifer: It is the realm  
Of Death. – Wouldst have it present?

Cain: Till I know  
That which it really is, I cannot answer. 15  
But if it be as I have heard my father  
Deal out in his long homilies, 'tis a thing –  
Oh God! I dare not think on't! Cursed be  
He who invented Life that leads to Death!  
Or the dull mass of life, that, being life, 20  
Could not retain, but needs must forfeit it –  
Even for the innocent!

Lucifer: Dost thou curse thy father?  
Cain: Cursed he not me in giving me my birth?  
Cursed he not me before my birth, in daring  
To pluck the fruit forbidden?

Lucifer: Thou say'st well: 25  
The curse is mutual 'twixt thy sire and thee –  
But for thy sons and brother?

Cain: Let them share it  
With me, their sire and brother! What else is  
Bequeathed to me? I leave them my inheritance!  
Oh, ye interminable gloomy realms 30  
Of swimming shadows and enormous shapes,  
Some fully shown, some indistinct, and all  
Mighty and melancholy – what are ye?  
Live ye, or have ye lived?

Lucifer: Somewhat of both.  
Cain: Then what is Death?

Lucifer: What? Hath not he who made ye 35  
Said 'tis another life?

Cain: Till now he hath  
Said nothing, save that all shall die.

Lucifer: Perhaps  
He one day will unfold that further secret.

Cain: Happy the day!

Lucifer: Yes; happy! when unfolded, 40  
Through agonies unspeakable, and clogged  
With agonies eternal, to innumerable  
Yet unborn myriads of unconscious atoms,  
All to be animated for this only!

Cain: What are these mighty phantoms which I see  
Floating around me?<sup>42</sup> – They wear not the form 45  
Of the Intelligences I have seen  
Round our regretted and unentered Eden;  
Nor wear the form of man as I have viewed it  
In Adam’s and in Abel’s, and in mine,  
Nor in my sister-bride’s, nor in my children’s: 50  
And yet they have an aspect, which, though not  
Of men nor Angels, looks like something, which,  
If not the last, rose higher than the first,  
Haughty, and high, and beautiful, and full  
Of seeming strength, but of inexplicable 55  
Shape; for I never saw such. They bear not  
The wing of Seraph, nor the face of man,  
Nor form of mightiest brute, nor aught that is  
Now breathing; mighty yet and beautiful  
As the most beautiful and mighty which 60  
Live, and yet so unlike them, that I scarce  
Can call them living.

Lucifer: Yet they lived.  
Cain: Where?  
Lucifer: Where  
Thou livest.  
Cain: When?  
Lucifer: On what thou callest Earth  
They did inhabit.  
Cain: Adam is the first.  
Lucifer: Of thine, I grant thee – but too mean to be 65  
The last of these.

Cain: And what are they?  
Lucifer: That which  
Thou shalt be.  
Cain: But what *were* they?  
Lucifer: Living, high,  
Intelligent, good, great, and glorious things,<sup>43</sup>  
As much superior unto all thy sire,  
Adam, could e’er have been in Eden, as 70  
The sixty-thousandth generation shall be,  
In its dull damp degeneracy, to  
Thee and thy son; – and how weak they are, judge  
But thy own flesh.

Cain: Ah me! and did *they* perish?  
Lucifer: Yes, from their earth, as thou wilt fade from thine.<sup>44</sup> 75  
Cain: But was *mine* theirs?  
Lucifer: It was.

**42:** This speech reflects B.’s interest in the fossil record, the full extent of which was being revealed in his day.

**43:** B. imagines the pre-Adamite beings to have been superior to the post-Adamites.

**44:** In *Detached Thought* 101, B. wrote, “If according to some speculations – you could prove the World many thousand years older than the Mosaic Chronology – or if you could knock up Adam & Eve and the Apple and Serpent – still what is to be put up in their stead? – or how is the difficulty removed? things must have had a beginning – and what matters it *when* or *how*? – – I sometimes think that *Man* may be the relic of some higher material being wrecked in a former world – and degenerated in the hardships and struggle through Chaos and Conformity – or something like it – as we see Laplanders, Esquimaux – &c. inferior in the present state – as the Elements become more inexorable – – but even then this higher Pre-Adamite Supposititious Creation must have had an Origin and a *Creator* – for a *Creator* is a more natural imagination than a fortuitous concourse of atoms – all things remount to a fountain – though they may flow to an Ocean.” (BLJ IX 46-7)

Cain: But not as now.  
It is too little and too lowly to  
Sustain such creatures.

Lucifer: True, it was more glorious.

Cain: And wherefore did it fall?

Lucifer: Ask him who fells.

Cain: But how?

Lucifer: By a most crushing and inexorable 80  
Destruction and disorder of the elements,  
Which struck a world to chaos, as a chaos  
Subsiding has struck out a world: such things,  
Though rare in time, are frequent in Eternity. –  
Pass on, and gaze upon the past.

Cain: 'Tis awful! 85

Lucifer: And true. Behold these phantoms! they were once  
Material as thou art.

Cain: And must I be  
Like them?

Lucifer: Let Him<sup>45</sup> who made thee answer that.  
I show thee what thy predecessors are,  
And what they *were* thou feelest, in degree 90  
Inferior as thy petty feelings and  
Thy pettier portion of the immortal part  
Of high intelligence and earthly strength.  
What ye in common have with what they had  
Is Life, and what ye *shall* have – Death: the rest 95  
Of your poor attributes is such as suits  
Reptiles engendered out of the subsiding  
Slime of a mighty universe, crushed into  
A scarcely-yet shaped planet, peopled with  
Things whose enjoyment was to be in blindness – 100  
A Paradise of Ignorance, from which  
Knowledge was barred as poison. But behold  
What these superior beings are or were;  
Or, if it irk thee, turn thee back and till  
The earth, thy task – I'll waft thee there in safety. 105

Cain: No: I'll stay here.

Lucifer: How long?

Cain: Forever! Since  
I must one day return here from the earth,  
I rather would remain; I'm sick of all  
That dust has shown me – let me dwell in shadow.

Lucifer: It cannot be: thou now beholdest as 110  
A vision that which is reality.  
To make thyself fit for this dwelling, thou  
Must pass through what the things thou seest have passed –  
The gates of Death.

Cain: By what gate have we entered  
Even now?

Lucifer: By mine! But, plighted to return, 115  
My Spirit buoys thee up to breathe in regions  
Where all is breathless save thyself. Gaze on;  
But do not think to dwell here till thine hour  
Is come!

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45: All editions follow the Ms in having "Let He": I felt the solecism to be too gross.

Cain:	And these, too – can they ne'er repass To Earth again?	
Lucifer:	<i>Their</i> Earth is gone forever – So changed by its convulsion, they would not Be conscious to a single present spot Of its new scarcely hardened surface – 'twas – Oh, what a beautiful world it <i>was!</i>	120
Cain:	And is! It is not with the earth, though I must till it, I feel at war – but that I may not profit By what it bears of beautiful, untoiling, Nor gratify my thousand swelling thoughts With knowledge, nor allay my thousand fears Of Death and Life.	125
Lucifer:	What thy world is, thou see'st, But canst not comprehend the shadow of That which it was.	130
Cain:	And those enormous creatures, Phantoms inferior in intelligence (At least so seeming) to the things we have passed, Resembling somewhat the wild habitants	135
	Of the deep woods of Earth, the hugest which Roar nightly in the forest, but tenfold In magnitude and terror; taller than The Cherub-guarded walls of Eden – with Eyes flashing like the fiery swords which fence them – And tusks projecting like the trees stripped of Their bark and branches – what were they?	140
Lucifer:	That which The Mammoth is in thy world; – but these lie By myriads underneath its surface.	
Cain:	But None on it?	
Lucifer:	No: for thy frail race to war With them would render the curse on it useless – 'Twould be destroyed so early.	145
Cain:	But why <i>war?</i>	
Lucifer:	You have forgotten the denunciation Which drove your race from Eden – war with all things, And Death to all things, and disease to most things, And pangs, and bitterness; these were the fruits Of the forbidden tree.	150
Cain:	But animals – Did they, too, eat of it, that they must die?	
Lucifer:	Your Maker told ye, <i>they</i> were made for you, As you for him. – You would not have their doom Superior to your own? Had Adam not Fallen, all had stood.	155
Cain:	Alas! the hopeless wretches! They too must share my sire's fate, like his sons; Like them, too, without having shared the apple; Like them, too, without the so dear-bought <i>knowledge!</i> It was a lying tree – for we know nothing. At least it <i>promised knowledge</i> at the price Of Death – but <i>knowledge</i> still: but what <i>knows</i> man?	160
Lucifer:	It may be Death leads to the <i>highest</i> knowledge;	

And being of all things the sole thing certain, 165  
 At least leads to the *surest* science: therefore  
 The Tree was true, though deadly.

Cain: These dim realms!  
 I see them, but I know them not.

Lucifer: Because  
 Thy hour is yet afar, and matter cannot  
 Comprehend Spirit wholly – but 'tis something 170  
 To know there are such realms.

Cain: We knew already  
 That there was Death.

Lucifer: But not what was beyond it.  
 Cain: Nor know I now.

Lucifer: Thou knowest that there is  
 A state, and many states beyond thine own –  
 And this thou knewest not this morn.

Cain: But all 175  
 Seems dim and shadowy.

Lucifer: Be content; it will  
 Seem clearer to thine immortality.

Cain: And yon immeasurable liquid space  
 Of glorious azure which floats on beyond us,  
 Which looks like water, and which I should deem 180  
 The river which flows out of Paradise  
 Past my own dwelling, but that it is bankless  
 And boundless, and of an ethereal hue – What is it?

Lucifer: There is still some such on Earth,  
 Although inferior, and thy children shall 185  
 Dwell near it – 'tis the phantasm of an Ocean.

Cain: 'Tis like another world; a liquid sun –  
 And those inordinate creatures sporting o'er  
 Its shining surface?

Lucifer: Are its inhabitants,  
 The past Leviathans.<sup>46</sup>

Cain: And yon immense 190  
 Serpent, which rears his dripping mane and vasty  
 Head, ten times higher than the haughtiest cedar,  
 Forth from the abyss, looking as he could coil  
 Himself around the orbs we lately looked on –  
 Is he not of the kind which basked beneath 195  
 The Tree in Eden?

Lucifer: Eve, thy mother, best  
 Can tell what shape of Serpent tempted her.

Cain: This seems too terrible. No doubt the other  
 Had more of beauty.

Lucifer: Hast thou ne'er beheld him?

Cain: Many of the same kind (at least so called) 200  
 But never that precisely, which persuaded  
 The fatal fruit, nor even of the same aspect.

Lucifer: Your father saw him not?

Cain: No: 'twas my mother  
 Who tempted him – she tempted by the Serpent.

Lucifer: Good man! whene'er thy wife, or thy sons' wives, 205

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**46:** In the Bible, the leviathan is most often a mere monster (see Job 41, 1; Psalms 74, 14 and 104, 26); however, Isaiah (27, 1) makes it a *piercing* and *crooked serpent*, to be slain by the Lord.

Tempt thee or them to aught that's new or strange,  
 Be sure thou seest first who hath tempted *them!*  
 Cain: Thy precept comes too late: there is no more  
 For Serpents to tempt woman to.  
 Lucifer: But there  
 Are some things still which woman may tempt man to, 210  
 And man tempt woman – let thy sons look to it!  
 My counsel is a kind one; for 'tis even  
 Given chiefly at my own expense; 'tis true,  
 'Twill not be followed, so there's little lost.  
 Cain: I understand not this.  
 Lucifer: The happier thou! – 215  
 Thy world and thou are still too young! Thou thinkest  
 Thyself most wicked and unhappy – is it  
 Not so?  
 Cain: For crime, I know not but for pain,  
 I have felt much.  
 Lucifer: First-born of the first man!  
 Thy present state of Sin – and thou art evil, 220  
 Of sorrow – and thou sufferest, are both Eden  
 In all its innocence compared to what  
 Thou shortly may'st be; and that state again,  
 In its redoubled wretchedness, a Paradise  
 To what thy sons' sons' sons, accumulating 225  
 In generations like to dust (which they  
 In fact but add to), shall endure and do. –  
 Now let us back to Earth!  
 Cain: And wherefore didst thou  
 Lead me here only to inform me this?  
 Lucifer: Was not thy quest for knowledge?  
 Cain: Yes – as being 230  
 The road to happiness!  
 Lucifer: If truth be so,  
 Thou hast it.  
 Cain: Then my father's God did well  
 When he prohibited the fatal Tree.  
 Lucifer: But had done better in not planting it.  
 But ignorance of evil doth not save 235  
 From evil; it must still roll on the same,  
 A part of all things.  
 Cain: Not of all things. No –  
 I'll not believe it – for I thirst for good.  
 Lucifer: And who and what doth not? *Who* covets evil  
 For its own bitter sake? – *None* – nothing! 'tis 240  
 The leaven of all life, and lifelessness.  
 Cain: Within those glorious orbs which we beheld,  
 Distant, and dazzling, and innumerable,  
 Ere we came down into this phantom realm,  
 Ill cannot come: they are too beautiful. 245  
 Lucifer: Thou hast seen them from afar.  
 Cain: And what of that?  
 Distance can but diminish glory – they,  
 When nearer, must be more ineffable.  
 Lucifer: Approach the things of Earth most beautiful,  
 And judge their beauty near.  
 Cain: I have done this – 250

Lucifer: The loveliest thing I know is loveliest nearest.  
 Then there must be delusion. – What is that  
 Which being nearest to thine eyes is still  
 More beautiful than beauteous things remote?

Cain: My sister Adah. – All the stars of Heaven, 255  
 The deep blue Noon of Night, lit by an Orb  
 Which looks a Spirit, or a Spirit's World –  
 The hues of twilight – the Sun's gorgeous coming –  
 His Setting indescribable, which fills  
 My eyes with pleasant tears as I behold 260  
 Him sink, and feel my heart float softly with him  
 Along that Western Paradise of Clouds –  
 The forest shade, the Green bough, the bird's voice –  
 The vesper bird's, which seems to sing of love,  
 And mingles with the song of Cherubim, 265  
 As the day closes over Eden's walls; –  
 All these are nothing, to my eyes and heart,  
 Like Adah's face: I turn from Earth and Heaven  
 To gaze on it.

Lucifer: 'Tis fair as frail mortality,  
 In the first dawn and bloom of young creation, 270  
 And earliest embraces of Earth's parents,  
 Can make its offspring; still it is delusion.

Cain: You think so, being not her brother.

Lucifer: Mortal!  
 My brotherhood's with those who have no children.<sup>47</sup>

Cain: Then thou canst have no fellowship with us. 275

Lucifer: It may be that thine own shall be for me.  
 But if thou dost possess a beautiful  
 Being beyond all beauty in thine eyes,  
 Why art thou wretched?

Cain: Why do I exist?  
 Why art *thou* wretched? why are all things so? 280  
 Even he who made us must be, as the Maker  
 Of things unhappy! To produce destruction  
 Can surely never be the task of joy,  
 And yet my sire says he's omnipotent:  
 Then why is Evil – he being Good? I asked 285  
 This question of my father; and he said,  
 Because this Evil only was the path  
 To Good. Strange Good, that must arise from out  
 Its deadly opposite. I lately saw  
 A lamb stung by a reptile: the poor suckling 290  
 Lay foaming on the earth, beneath the vain  
 And piteous bleating of its restless dam;  
 My father plucked some herbs, and laid them to  
 The wound; and by degrees the helpless wretch  
 Resumed its careless life, and rose to drain 295  
 The mother's milk, who o'er it tremulous  
 Stood licking its reviving limbs with joy.  
 Behold, my son! said Adam, how from Evil  
 Springs Good!

Lucifer: What didst thou answer?

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47: The devil, being an immortal, cannot beget. But compare Macduff speaking of Macbeth, at IV iii 215: "He has no children."



Cain: Nothing; for  
He is my father: but I thought, that 'twere 300  
A better portion for the animal  
Never to have been *stung at all* than to  
Purchase renewal of its little life  
With agonies unutterable, though  
Dispelled by antidotes.<sup>48</sup>

Lucifer: But as thou saidst 305  
Of all beloved things thou lovest her  
Who shared thy mother's milk, and giveth hers  
Unto thy children –

Cain: Most assuredly:  
What should I be without her?

Lucifer: What am I?  
Cain: Dost thou love nothing?  
Lucifer: What does thy God love? 310  
Cain: All things, my father says; but I confess  
I see it not in their allotment here.

Lucifer: And, therefore, thou canst not see if *I* love  
Or no – except some vast and general purpose,  
To which particular things must melt like snows. 315

Cain: Snows! what are they?  
Lucifer: Be happier in not knowing  
What thy remoter offspring must encounter;  
But bask beneath the clime which knows no winter.

Cain: But dost thou not love something like thyself?  
Lucifer: And dost thou love *thyself*?  
Cain: Yes, but love more 320  
What makes my feelings more endurable,  
And is more than myself, because I love it!

Lucifer: Thou lovest it, because 'tis beautiful,  
As was the apple in thy mother's eye;  
And when it ceases to be so, thy love 325  
Will cease, like any other appetite.

Cain: Cease to be beautiful! how can that be?  
Lucifer: With time.  
Cain: But time has passed, and hitherto  
Even Adam and my mother both are fair:  
Not fair like Adah and the Seraphim – 330  
But very fair.

Lucifer: All that must pass away  
In them and her.

Cain: I'm sorry for it; but  
Cannot conceive my love for her the less:  
And when her beauty disappears, methinks  
He who creates all beauty will lose more 335  
Than me in seeing perish such a work.

Lucifer: I pity thee who lovest what must perish.  
Cain: And I thee who lov'st nothing.

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**48:** Thus the Fall is Fortunate in that it allows God to show his love via the Incarnation: but surely it would be better if he had not permitted the Fall in the first place? Compare: "... a plough-man clearly perceives, that it is a much greater goodness to hinder a man from falling into a ditch, than to let him fall in, and then take him out an hour after; and that it is much better to hinder an assassin from killing a man, than to break him on the wheel after he has been permitted to commit the murder ... all this serves to admonish us, that we must not engage with the Manichees, till we have before all things laid down the doctrine of the exaltation of faith, and the abasement of reason" – Bayle, IV 516, Chapter on the Paulicians, nE.

Lucifer: And thy brother –  
Sits he not near thy heart?<sup>49</sup>

Cain: Why should he not?

Lucifer: Thy father loves him well – so does thy God. 340

Cain: And so do I.

Lucifer: 'Tis well and meekly done.

Cain: Meekly!

Lucifer: He is the second born of flesh,  
And is his mother's favourite.

Cain: Let him keep  
Her favour, since the Serpent was the first  
To win it.

Lucifer: And his father's?

Cain: What is that 345

Lucifer: To me? should I not love that which all love?  
And the Jehovah – the indulgent Lord,  
And bounteous planter of barred Paradise –  
He, too, looks smilingly on Abel.

Cain: I  
Ne'er saw him, and I know not if he smiles. 350

Lucifer: But you have seen his Angels.

Cain: Rarely.

Lucifer: But  
Sufficiently to see they love your brother:  
His sacrifices are acceptable.

Cain: So be they! wherefore speak to me of this?

Lucifer: Because thou hast thought of this ere now.

Cain: And if 355  
I have thought, why recall a thought that – (*he pauses as agitated*) –  
Spirit!  
*Here we are in thy world; speak not of mine.*  
Thou hast shown me wonders: thou hast shown me those  
Mighty Pre-Adamites who walked the Earth  
Of which ours is the wreck: thou hast pointed out 360  
Myriads of starry worlds, of which our own  
Is the dim and remote companion, in  
Infinity of life: thou hast shown me shadows  
Of that existence with the dreaded name  
Which my sire brought us – Death; thou hast shown me much 365  
But not all: show me where Jehovah dwells,  
In his especial Paradise – or *thine*:  
Where is it?

Lucifer: *Here*, and o'er all space.

Cain: But ye  
Have some allotted dwelling – as all things;  
Clay has its earth, and other worlds their tenants; 370  
All temporary breathing creatures their  
Peculiar element; and things which have  
Long ceased to breathe *our* breath, have theirs, thou say'st;  
And the Jehovah and thyself have thine –  
Ye do not dwell together?

Lucifer: No, we reign 375  
Together; but our dwellings are asunder.

Cain: Would there were only one of ye! perchance

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49: Lucifer knows that Cain will kill Abel, and plays with the knowledge in this next section.

An unity of purpose might make union  
 In elements which seem now jarred in storms. 380  
 How came ye, being Spirits wise and infinite,  
 To separate? Are ye not as brethren in  
 Your essence – and your nature, and your glory?  
 Lucifer: Art not thou Abel's brother?  
 Cain: We are brethren,  
 And so we shall remain; but were it not so,  
 Is Spirit like to flesh? can it fall out – 385  
 Infinity with Immortality?  
 Jarring and turning space to misery – for what?  
 Lucifer: To reign.  
 Cain: Did ye not tell me that  
 Ye are both eternal?  
 Lucifer: Yea!  
 Cain: And what I have seen –  
 Yon blue immensity, is boundless? 390  
 Lucifer: Aye.  
 Cain: And cannot ye both *reign*, then? – is there not  
 Enough? – why should ye differ?  
 Lucifer: We *both* reign.  
 Cain: But one of you makes evil.  
 Lucifer: Which?  
 Cain: Thou! for  
 If thou canst do man good, why dost thou not?  
 Lucifer: And why not he who made? *I* made ye not; 395  
 Ye are *his* creatures, and not mine.  
 Cain: Then leave us  
*His* creatures, as thou say'st we are, or show me  
 Thy dwelling, or *his* dwelling.  
 Lucifer: I could show thee  
 Both; but the time will come thou shalt see one  
 Of them for evermore.  
 Cain: And why not now? 400  
 Lucifer: Thy human mind hath scarcely grasp to gather  
 The little I have shown thee into calm  
 And clear thought: and *thou* wouldst go on aspiring  
 To the great double Mysteries! the *two Principles*!  
 And gaze upon them on their secret thrones! 405  
 Dust! limit thy ambition; for to see  
 Either of these would be for thee to perish!<sup>50</sup>  
 Cain: And let me perish, so I see them!  
 Lucifer: There  
 The son of her who snatched the Apple spake!  
 But thou wouldst only perish, and not see them; 410  
 That sight is for the other state.  
 Cain: Of Death?

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**50:** Bayle writes thus of the Paulicians (an Armenian Manichean sect): “Their fundamental doctrine, was that of two co-eternal principles, and independent one upon another. This doctrine at first hearing creates horror, and consequently it is strange, that the Manichean sect could seduce so great a part of the world” (Bayle IV 512). Walter Scott wrote to Murray: “Lord Byron might have made this [the treachery of Lucifer's pretended Manicheism] more evident, by placing in the mouth of Adam, or of some good and protecting Spirit, the reasons which render the existence of moral evil consistent with the general benevolence of the Deity. The great key to the mystery is, perhaps, the imperfection of our own faculties, which see and feel strongly the partial evils which press upon us, but know too little of the general system of the universe, to be aware how the existence of these is to be reconciled with the benevolence of the great Creator” (quoted CPW VI 654).

Lucifer: That is the prelude.

Cain: Then I dread it less,  
Now that I know it leads to something definite.

Lucifer: And now I will convey thee to thy world,  
Were thou shalt multiply the race of Adam, 415  
Eat, drink, toil, tremble, laugh, weep, sleep – and die!

Cain: And to what end have I beheld these things  
Which thou hast shown me?

Lucifer: Didst thou not require  
Knowledge? And have I not in what I showed,  
Taught thee to know thyself?

Cain: Alas! I seem 420  
Nothing.

Lucifer: And this should be the human sum  
Of knowledge, to know mortal nature's nothingness;  
Bequeath that science to thy children, and  
'Twill spare them many tortures.

Cain: Haughty Spirit!  
Thou speak'st it proudly; but thyself, though proud, 425  
Hast a superior.

Lucifer: No! By Heaven, which he  
Holds, and the abyss, and the immensity  
Of worlds and life, which I hold with him – No!  
I have a Victor – true; but no superior.  
Homage he has from all – but none from me: 430  
I battle it against him, as I battled  
In highest Heaven – through all Eternity,  
And the unfathomable gulphs of Hades,  
And the interminable realms of space,  
And the infinity of endless ages, 435  
All, all, will I dispute! And world by world,  
And star by star, and universe by universe,  
Shall tremble in the balance, till the great  
Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease,  
Which it ne'er shall, till he or I be quenched!<sup>51</sup> 440  
And what can quench our immortality,  
Or mutual and irrevocable hate?  
He as a conqueror will call the conquered  
*Evil*, but what will be the *Good* he gives?  
Were I the victor, *his* works would be deemed 445  
The only evil ones. And you, ye new  
And scare-born mortals, what have been his gifts  
To you already, in your little world?

Cain: But few; and some of those but bitter.

Lucifer: Back  
With me, then, to thine Earth, and try the rest 450  
Of his celestial boons to you and yours.  
Evil and Good are things in their own essence,

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51 Compare Satan's defiance at *Paradise Lost* I 105-11:

What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost; th'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.

And not made good or evil by the Giver;  
But if he gives you good – so call him; if  
Evil springs from *him*, do not name it *mine*, 455  
Till ye know better its true fount; and judge  
Not by words, though of Spirits, but the fruits  
Of your existence, such as it must be.  
*One good* gift has the fatal apple given, –  
Your *reason* – let it not be overswayed 460  
By tyrannous threats to force you into faith  
'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling:  
Think and endure, – and form an inner world  
In your own bosom – where the outward fails;  
So shall you nearer be the spiritual 465  
Nature, and war triumphant with your own.

*They disappear.*

### ACT III.<sup>52</sup>

SCENE 1. – The Earth, near Eden, as in Act 1.

*Enter Cain and Adah.*

Adah: Hush! tread softly, Cain!  
Cain: I will – but wherefore?  
Adah: Our little Enoch sleeps upon yon bed  
Of leaves, beneath the cypress.  
Cain: Cypress! 'Tis  
A gloomy tree, which looks as if it mourned  
O'er what it shadows; wherefore didst thou choose it 5  
For our child's canopy?  
Adah: Because its branches  
Shut out the sun like Night, and therefore seemed  
Fitting to shadow slumber.  
Cain: Aye, the last –  
And longest; but no matter – lead me to him.

*They go up to the child.*

Adah: How lovely he appears! his little cheeks, 10  
In their pure incarnation, vying with  
The rose leaves strewn beneath them.  
Adah: And his lips, too,  
How beautifully parted! No; you shall not  
Kiss him, at least not now: he will awake soon –  
His hour of mid-day rest is nearly over; 15  
But it were pity to disturb him till  
'Tis closed.  
Cain: You have said well; I will contain  
My heart till then. He smiles, and sleeps! – sleep on,  
And smile, thou little, young inheritor  
Of a world scare less young: sleep on, and smile! 20  
Thine are the hours and days when both are cheering  
And innocent! *thou* hast not plucked the fruit –

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**52:** Act III is the only one based on the Bible: “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wrath? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou does not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? and he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of the brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be on the earth. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went forth from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden” (Genesis 4, 1-16).

Thou know'st not thou art naked! Must the time  
 Come thou shalt be amerced for Sins unknown,  
 Which were not thine nor mine? But now sleep on! 25  
 His cheeks are reddening into deeper smiles,  
 And shining lids are trembling o'er his long  
 Lashes, dark as the cypress which waves o'er them;  
 Half open, from beneath them the clear blue  
 Laughs out, although in slumber. He must dream – 30  
 Of what? Of Paradise! – Aye! dream of it,  
 My disinherited boy! 'Tis but a dream;  
 For never more thyself, thy sons, nor fathers,  
 Shall walk in that forbidden place of joy!  
 Adah: Dear Cain! Nay, do not whisper o'er our son 35  
 Such melancholy yearnings o'er the past:  
 Why wilt thou always mourn for Paradise?  
 Can we not make another?  
 Cain: Where?  
 Adah: Here, or  
 Where'er thou wilt: where'er thou art, I feel not  
 The want of this so much regretted Eden. 40  
 Have I not thee – our boy – our sire, and brother,  
 And Zillah – our sweet sister, and our Eve,  
 To whom we own so much besides our birth?  
 Cain: Yes – Death, too, is among the debts we owe her.  
 Adah: Cain! that proud Spirit, who withdrew thee hence, 45  
 Hath saddened thine still deeper. I had hoped  
 The promised wonders which thou hast beheld,  
 Visions, thou say'st, of past and present worlds,  
 Would have composed thy mind into the calm  
 Of a contented knowledge; but I see 50  
 Thy guide hath done thee evil: still I thank him,  
 And can forgive him all, that he so soon  
 Hath given thee back to us.  
 Cain: So soon?  
 Adah: 'Tis scarcely  
 Two hours since ye departed: two *long* years  
 To *me*, but only *hours* upon the sun.<sup>53</sup> 55  
 Cain: And yet I have approached that sun, and seen  
 Worlds which he once shone on, and never more  
 Shall light; and worlds he never lit: methought  
 Years had rolled o'er my absence.  
 Adah: Hardly hours.  
 Cain: The mind then hath capacity of time, 60  
 And measures it by that which it beholds,  
 Pleasing or painful; little or almighty.  
 I had beheld the immemorial works  
 Of endless beings; skirred<sup>54</sup> extinguished worlds;  
 And, gazing on Eternity, methought 65  
 I'd borrowed more by a few drops of ages  
 From its immensity: but now I feel  
 My littleness again. Well said the Spirit,  
 That I was nothing!  
 Adah: Wherefore said he so?

53: A variation on the thought recorded above, at I 536n.

54: See *Macbeth*, V iii 35: "Skirr the country round!"

	Jehovah said not that.	
Cain:	No: <i>he</i> contents him	70
	With making us the <i>nothing</i> which we are; And after flattering dust with glimpses of Eden and Immortality, resolves It back to dust again – for what?	
Adah:	Thou know'st – Even for our parents' error.	
Cain:	What is that	75
	To us? they sinned, then <i>let them</i> die!	
Adah:	Thou hast not spoken well, nor is that thought Thy own, but of the Spirit who was with thee. Would <i>I</i> could die for them, so <i>they</i> might live!	
Cain:	Why, so say I – provided that one victim Might satiate the Insatiable of life, And that our little rosy sleeper there Might never taste of Death nor human sorrow, Nor hand it down to those who spring from him.	80
Adah:	How know we that some such atonement one day May not redeem our race?	85
Cain:	By sacrificing The harmless for the guilty? what atonement Were there? <sup>55</sup> Why, <i>we</i> are innocent: what have we Done, that we must be victims for a deed Before our birth, or need have victims to	90
	Atoned for this mysterious, nameless Sin – If it be such a Sin to seek for knowledge?	
Adah:	Alas! thou sinnest now, my Cain: thy words Sound impious in mine ears.	
Cain:	Then leave me!	
Adah:	Never! Though thy God left thee.	
Cain:	Say, what have we here?	95
Adah:	Two altars, which our brother Abel made During thine absence, whereupon to offer A sacrifice to God on thy return.	
Cain:	And how knew <i>he</i> , that <i>I</i> would be so ready With the burnt offerings, which he daily brings With a meek brow, whose base humility Shows more of fear than worship – as a bribe To the Creator?	100
Adah:	Surely, 'tis well done.	
Cain:	One altar may suffice; <i>I</i> have no offering.	
Adah:	The fruits of the earth, the early, beautiful, Blossom and bud – and bloom of flowers and fruits – These are a goodly offering to the Lord, Given with a gentle and a contrite Spirit.	105
Cain:	I've toiled, and tilled, and sweaten in the sun, According to the curse – must I do more?	110

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**55:** On September 13th 1811, B. wrote to Francis Hodgson, who was about to become a priest, "... the basis of your religion is *injustice*; the *Son of God*, the *pure*, the *immaculate*, the *innocent*, is sacrificed for the *guilty*. This proves *His* heroism; but no more does away with *man's* guilt than a schoolboy's volunteering to be flogged for another would exculpate the dunce from negligence, or preserve him from the rod. You degrade the Creator, in the first place, by making Him a begetter of children; and in the next you convert Him into a tyrant over an immaculate and injured Being, who is sent into existence to suffer death for the benefit of some millions of scoundrels, who, after all, seem as likely to be damned as ever" (BLJ II 97).



For what should I be gentle? for a war  
 With all the elements ere they will yield  
 The bread we eat? For what must I be grateful?  
 For being dust, and grovelling in the dust,  
 Till I return to dust? If I am nothing – 115  
 For nothing shall I be an hypocrite,  
 And seem well-pleased with pain? For what should I  
 Be contrite? for my father's Sin, already  
 Expiate with what we all have undergone,  
 And to be more than expiated by 120  
 The ages prophesied, upon our seed.  
 Little deems our young blooming sleeper, there,  
 The germs of an eternal misery  
 To myriads is within him! better 'twere  
 I snatched him in his sleep, and dashed him 'gainst 125  
 The rocks, than let him live to –

Adah: Oh, my God!  
 Touch not the child – my child! *thy* child! Oh, Cain!

Cain: Fear not! for all the stars, and all the power  
 Which sways them I would not accost yon infant  
 With ruder greeting than a father's kiss. 130

Adah: Then, why so awful in thy speech?  
 Cain: I said,  
 'Twere better that he ceased to live, than give  
 Life to so much of sorrow as he must  
 Endure, and, harder still, bequeath; but since  
 That saying jars you, let us only say – 135  
 'Twere better that he never had been born.

Adah: Oh, do not say so! Where were then the joys,  
 The mother's joys of watching, nourishing,  
 And loving him? Soft! he awakes. Sweet Enoch!

*She goes to the child.*

Oh, Cain! look on him; see how full of life, 140  
 Of strength, of bloom, of beauty, and of joy –  
 How like to me – how like to thee, when gentle –  
 For *then* we are *all* alike; is't not so, Cain?  
 Mother, and sire, and son, our features are  
 Reflected in each other; as they are 145  
 In the clear water, when *they* are *gentle*, and  
 When *thou* art *gentle*. Love us, then, my Cain!  
 And love thyself for our sakes, for we love thee.  
 Look! how he laughs and stretches out his arms,  
 And opens wide his blue eyes upon thine, 150  
 To hail his father; while his little form  
 Flutters as winged with joy. Talk not of pain!  
 The childless Cherubs well might envy thee  
 The pleasures of a parent! Bless him, Cain!  
 As yet he hath no words to thank thee, but 155  
 His heart will, and thine own too.

Cain: Bless thee, boy!  
 If that a mortal blessing may avail thee,  
 To save thee from the Serpent's curse!

Adah: It shall.  
 Surely a father's blessing may avert

Cain: A reptile's subtlety.  
Of that I doubt; 160  
But bless him ne'er the less.

Adah: Our brother comes.  
Cain: Thy brother Abel.

*Enter Abel.*

Abel: Welcome, Cain! My brother,  
The peace of God be on thee!

Cain: Abel, hail!  
Abel: Our sister tells me that thou hast been wandering,  
In high communion with a Spirit, far 165  
Beyond our wonted range. Was he of those  
We have seen and spoken with, like to our father?

Cain: No.  
Abel: Why then commune with him? he may be  
A foe to the Most High.

Cain: And friend to man.  
Has the Most High been so – if so you term him? 170

Abel: *Term him!* your words are strange today, my brother.  
My sister Adah, leave us for awhile –  
We mean to sacrifice.<sup>56</sup>

Adah: Farewell, my Cain;  
But first embrace thy son. May his soft Spirit,  
And Abel's pious ministry, recall thee 175  
To peace and holiness!

*Exit Adah, with her child.*<sup>57</sup>

Abel: Where hast thou been?  
Cain: I know not.  
Abel: Nor what thou hast seen?  
Cain: The dead –  
The Immortal – the Unbounded – the Omnipotent –  
The overpowering mysteries of space –  
The innumerable worlds that were and are – 180  
A whirlwind of such overwhelming things,  
Suns, moons, and Earth, upon their loud-voiced spheres  
Singing in thunder round me, as have made me  
Unfit for mortal converse: leave me, Abel.

Abel: Thine eyes are flashing with unnatural light – 185  
Thy cheek is flushed with an unnatural hue –  
Thy words are fraught with an unnatural sound –  
What may this mean?

Cain: It means – I pray thee, leave me.  
Abel: Not till we have prayed and sacrificed together.  
Cain: Abel, I pray thee, sacrifice alone – 190  
Jehovah loves thee well.

Abel: *Both* well, I hope.

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**56:** Sacrifice and prayer being a male prerogative.

**57:** B.'s letter to Moore, quoted above at the start of Act II, n, concludes: "The consequence is, that Cain comes back and kills Abel in a fit of dissatisfaction, partly with the politics of Paradise, which had driven them all out if it, and partly because (as it is written in Genesis) Abel's sacrifice was the more acceptable to the Deity. I trust that the Rhapsody has arrived – it is in three acts, and entitled 'A Mystery,' according to the former Christian custom, and in honour of what it probably will remain to the reader" (BLJ VIII 216).

Cain: But thee the better: I care not for that;  
Thou art fitter for his worship than I am;  
Revere him, then – but let it be alone –  
At least, without me.

Abel: Brother, I should ill 195  
Deserve the name of our great father's son,  
If, as my elder, I revered thee not,  
And in the worship of our God, called not  
On thee to join me, and precede me in  
Our priesthood – 'tis thy place.

Cain: But I have ne'er 200  
Asserted it.

Abel: The more my grief; I pray thee  
To do so now: thy soul seems labouring in  
Some strong delusion; it will calm thee.

Cain: No;  
Nothing can calm me more. *Calm!* say I? Never 205  
Knew I what calm was in the soul, although  
I have seen the elements stilled. My Abel, leave me!  
Or let me leave thee to thy pious purpose.

Abel: Neither; we must perform our task together.  
Spurn me not.

Cain: If it must be so – well, then,  
What shall I do?

Abel: Choose one of those two altars. 210

Cain: Choose for me: they to me are so much turf  
And stone.

Abel: Choose thou!

Cain: I have chosen.

Abel: 'Tis the highest,  
And suits thee, as the elder. Now prepare  
Thine offerings.

Cain: Where are thine?

Abel: Behold them here – 215  
The firstlings of the flock, and fat thereof –  
A shepherd's humble offering.

Cain: I have no flocks;  
I am a tiller of the ground, and must  
Yield what it yieldeth to my toil – its fruit;

*He gathers fruits.*

Behold them in their various bloom and ripeness.

*They dress their altars, and kindle a flame upon them.*

Abel: My brother, as the elder, offer first 220  
Thy prayer and thanksgiving with sacrifice.

Cain: No – I am new to this; lead thou the way,  
And I will follow – as I may.

ABEL (*kneeling*). Oh, God!  
Who made us, and who breathed the breath of life 225  
Within our nostrils, who hath blessed us,  
And spared, despite our father's Sin, to make  
His children all lost, as they might have been,  
Had not thy justice been so tempered with

The mercy which is thy delight, as to  
 Accord a pardon like a Paradise, 230  
 Compared with our great crimes – Sole Lord of light!  
 Of good, and glory, and Eternity!  
 Without whom all were evil, and with whom  
 Nothing can err, except to some good end  
 Of thine omnipotent benevolence! 235  
 Inscrutable, but still to be fulfilled!  
 Accept from out thy humble first of shepherds'  
 First of the first-born flocks – an offering,  
 In itself nothing – as what offering can be  
 Aught unto thee? – but yet accept it for 240  
 The thanksgiving of him who spreads it in  
 The face of thy high Heaven – bowing his own  
 Even to the dust, of which he is – in honour  
 Of thee, and of thy name, for evermore!  
 Cain (*standing erect during this speech*):  
 Spirit whate'er or whose'er thou art, 245  
 Omnipotent, it may be – and, if good,  
 Shown in the exemption of thy deeds from evil;  
 Jehovah upon Earth! and God in Heaven!  
 And it may be with other names, because  
 Thine attributes seem many, as thy works – 250  
 If thou must be propitiated with prayers,  
 Take them! If thou must be induced with altars,  
 And softened with a sacrifice, receive them;  
 Two beings here erect them unto thee.  
 If thou lov'st blood, the shepherd's shrine, which smokes 255  
 On my right hand, hath shed it for thy service  
 In the first of his flock, whose limbs now reek  
 In sanguinary incense to thy skies;  
 Or, if the sweet and blooming fruits of earth,  
 And milder seasons, which the unstained turf 260  
 I spread them on now offers in the face  
 Of the broad sun which ripened them, may seem  
 Good to thee – inasmuch as they have not  
 Suffered in limb or life – and rather form  
 A sample of thy works, than supplication 265  
 To look on ours! If a shrine without victim,  
 And altar without gore, may win thy favour,  
 Look on it! and for him who dresseth it,  
 He is – such as thou mad'st him; and seeks nothing  
 Which must be won by prayers – if he be evil, 270  
 Strike him! thou art omnipotent, and may'st –  
 For what can he oppose? If he be good,  
 Strike him! or spare him, as thou wilt! since all  
 Rests upon thee; and Good and Evil seem  
 To have no power themselves, save in thy will – 275  
 And whether that be good or ill I know not,  
 Not being omnipotent, nor fit to judge  
 Omnipotence – but merely to endure  
 Its mandate; which thus far I have endured.

*The fire upon the altar of ABEL kindles into a column of the brightest flame, and ascends to Heaven;  
 while a whirlwind throws down the altar of CAIN, and scatters the fruits abroad upon the earth.*

Abel (*kneeling*): Oh, brother, pray! Jehovah's wroth with thee!<sup>58</sup> 280  
Cain: Why so?  
Abel: Thy fruits are scattered on the earth.  
Cain: From earth they came, to earth let them return;  
Their seed will bear fresh fruit there ere the summer:  
Thy burnt-flesh offering prospers better; see  
How Heaven licks up the flames, when thick with blood! 285  
Abel: Think not upon my offering's acceptance,  
But make another of thy own – before  
It is too late.  
Cain: I will build no more altars,  
Nor suffer any –  
Abel (*rising*): Cain! what meanest thou?  
Cain: To cast down yon vile flatterer of the clouds, 290  
The smoky harbinger of thy dull prayers  
Thine altar, with its blood of lambs and kids,  
Which fed on milk, to be destroyed in blood.  
Abel (*opposing him*): Thou shalt not – add not impious works to impious  
Words! let that altar stand – 'tis hallowed now 295  
By the immortal pleasure of Jehovah,  
In his acceptance of the victims.  
Cain: *His!*  
*His pleasure!* what was his high pleasure in  
The fumes of scorching flesh and smoking blood,  
To the pain of the bleating mothers, which 300  
Still yearn for their dead offspring? or the pangs  
Of the sad ignorant victims underneath  
Thy pious knife? Give way! this bloody record  
Shall not stand in the sun, to shame creation!  
Abel: Brother, give back! thou shalt not touch my altar 305  
With violence: if that thou wilt adopt it,  
To try another sacrifice, 'tis thine.  
Cain: Another sacrifice! Give way, or else  
That sacrifice may be –  
Abel: What mean'st thou?  
Cain: Give –  
Give way! – thy God loves blood! – then look to it – 310  
Give way, ere he hath *more!*  
Abel: In his great name,  
I stand between thee and the shrine which hath  
Had his acceptance.  
Cain: If thou lov'st thyself,  
Stand back till I have strewed this turf along  
Its native soil – else –  
Abel (*opposing him*): I love God far more 315  
Than life.  
Cain (*striking him with a brand, on the temples, which he snatches from the altar*):  
Then take thy life unto thy God,  
Since he loves lives.

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**58:** The line covers B.'s omission of the speech of the Lord, who, at this point in the source, provokes Cain by saying: "Cain, Why art thou wrath? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou does not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." (Genesis 4, 67). Bayle, with pseudo-naïvety, offers a number of reasons for God's rejection of Cain's offering: "I. That he was too tardy in making it: II. That he did not offer the First-fruits: III. That he did not make choice of the best" (Bayle II 248: chapter on Cain, nC). B. makes Cain's prayer a challenge rather than an obeisance; God is challenged at one's peril.

Abel (*falls*):           What hast thou done – my brother?  
Cain:            Brother!  
Abel:            Oh, God! receive thy servant! and  
                    Forgive his slayer, for he knew not what  
                    He did<sup>59</sup> – Cain, give me – give me thy hand; and tell       320  
                    Poor Zillah –

Cain (*after a moment's stupefaction*):  
                    My hand! 'tis all red, and with –  
                    What?

(*A long pause. – Looking slowly round*):  
                    Where am I? alone! Where's Abel? where  
                    Cain? Can it be that I am he? My brother,  
                    Awake! – why liest thou so long on the green earth?  
                    'Tis not the hour of slumber – why so pale?                       325  
                    What hast thou! – thou wert full of life this morn!  
                    Abel! I pray thee, mock me not! I smote  
                    Too fiercely, but not fatally. Ah, why  
                    Wouldst thou oppose me? This is mockery;  
                    And only done to daunt me – 'twas a blow –                       330  
                    And but a blow. Stir – stir – nay, only stir!  
                    Why, so – that's well! – thou breathest! breathe upon me!  
                    Oh God! Oh God!

Abel (*very faintly*):           What's he who speaks of God?<sup>60</sup>  
Cain:            Thy murderer.  
Abel:            Then may God forgive him! Cain,  
                    Comfort poor Zillah – she has but one brother               335  
                    Now.

*ABEL dies.*

Cain:            And I none! – Who makes me brotherless?  
                    His eyes are open! then he is not dead!  
                    Death is like sleep; and sleep shuts down our lids.  
                    His lips, too, are apart; why then he breathes;  
                    And yet I feel it not. – His heart! – his heart! –                       340  
                    Let me see, doth it beat? methinks – No! – no!  
                    This is a vision, else I am become  
                    The native of another and worse world.  
                    The Earth swims round me:– what is this? – 'tis wet;

*Puts his hand to his brow, and then looks at it.*

                    And yet there are no dews! 'Tis blood – *my* blood –               345  
                    My brother's and my own! and shed by me!  
                    Then what have I further to do with life,  
                    Since I have taken life from my own flesh?  
                    But he can not be dead! – Is silence Death?  
                    No; he will wake; then let me watch by him.                       350  
                    Life cannot be so slight, as to be quenched  
                    Thus quickly! – he hath spoken to me since –  
                    What shall I say to him? – My brother! – No:  
                    He will not answer to that name; for brethren  
                    Smite not each other. Yet – yet – speak to me.               355  
                    Oh! for a word more of that gentle voice,

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**59:** Echoes Christ's words at Luke 23, 34.

**60:** Abel's brief return from the dead recalls that of Desdemona at *Othello* V ii 120 *et seq.*

That I may bear to hear my own again!

*Enter Zillah.*

Zillah: I heard a heavy sound; what can it be?  
'Tis Cain; and watching by my husband. What  
Dost thou there, brother? Doth he sleep? Oh, Heaven! 360  
What means this paleness, and yon stream? – No, no!  
It is not blood; for who would shed his blood?  
Abel! what's this? – who hath done this? He moves not;  
He breathes not: and his hands drop down from mine  
With stony lifelessness! Ah! cruel Cain! 365  
Why camest thou not in time to save him from  
This violence? Whatever hath assailed him,  
Thou wert the stronger, and shouldst have stepped in  
Between him and aggression! Father! – Eve! –  
Adah! – come hither! Death is in the world! 370

*Exit Zillah, calling on her Parents, etc.*

Cain (*solus*): And who hath brought him there? – I – who abhor  
The name of Death so deeply, that the thought  
Empoisoned all my life, before I knew  
His aspect – I have led him here, and given  
My brother to his cold and still embrace, 375  
As if he would not have asserted his  
Inexorable claim without my aid.  
I am awake at last – a dreary dream  
Had maddened me; – but *he* shall ne'er awake!

*Enter Adam, Eve, Adah, and Zillah.*

Adam: A voice of woe from Zillah brings me here – 380  
What do I see? – 'Tis true! – My son! – my son!  
(*To Eve*) Woman, behold the Serpent's work, and thine!  
Eve: Oh! speak not of it now: the Serpent's fangs  
Are in my heart! My best beloved, Abel!  
Jehovah! this is punishment beyond 385  
A mother's Sin, to take *him* from me!  
Adam: Who,  
Or what hath done this deed? – speak, Cain, since thou  
Wert present; was it some more hostile Angels,  
Who walks not with Jehovah? or some wild  
Brute of the forest?  
Eve: Ah! a livid light 390  
Breaks through, as from a thunder-cloud! yon brand  
Massy and bloody! snatched from off the altar,  
And black with smoke, and red with –  
Adam: Speak, my son!  
Speak, and assure us, wretched as we are,  
That we are not more miserable still. 395  
Adah: Speak, Cain! and say it was not *thou*!  
Eve: It was!  
I see it now – he hangs his guilty head,  
And covers his ferocious eye with hands

	Incarnadine! <sup>61</sup>	
Adah:	Mother, thou dost him wrong – Cain! clear thee from this horrible accusal, Which grief wrings from our parent.	400
Eve:	Hear, Jehovah! May the eternal Serpent's curse be on him! For he was fitter for his seed than ours. May all his days be desolate! May –	
Adah:	Hold! Curse him not, Mother, for he is thy son – Curse him not, Mother, for his is my brother, And my betrothed.	405
Eve:	He hath left thee no brother – Zillah no husband – me <i>no son!</i> for thus I curse him from my sight for evermore! All bonds I break between us, as he broke That of his nature, in yon – Oh Death! Death! Why didst thou not take me, who first incurred thee? Why dost thou not so now?	410
Adam:	Eve! let not this, Thy natural grief, lead to impiety! A heavy doom was long forespoken to us; And now that it begins, let it be borne In such sort as may show our God, that we Are faithful servants to his holy will.	415
Eve ( <i>pointing to Cain</i> ):	<i>His will!</i> the will of yon Incarnate Spirit Of Death, whom I have brought upon the Earth To strew it with the dead. May all the curses Of life be on him! <sup>62</sup> and his agonies Drive him forth o'er the wilderness, like us From Eden, till his children do by him As he did by his brother! May the swords And wings of fiery Cherubim pursue him By day and Night – snakes spring up in his path – Earth's fruits be ashes in his mouth – the leaves On which he lays his head to sleep be strewed With scorpions! May his dreams be of his victim! His waking a continual dread of Death! May the clear rivers turn to blood as he Stoops down to stain them with his raging lip! May every element shun or change to him! <sup>63</sup>	420  425  430

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**61:** See *Macbeth*, II ii 62.

**62:** Eve's curse may be compared with that of the Duchess of York to her son at *Richard III* IV iv 182-5. It is from B.'s imagination, having no Biblical precedent, and renders Cain's subsequent condemnation to wander, and the mark put on his brow by the Angel of the Lord, anti-climactic and even superfluous.

**63:** Lines 431-4 derive from II, 14 of *The Curse of Kehama*, by the detested Southey:

... Earth which is mine  
Its fruits shall deny thee,  
And Water shall hear me,  
And know thee and fly thee,  
And the Winds shall not touch thee  
When they pass by thee,  
And the Dews shall not wet thee,  
When they fall nigh thee ...

The problem being that anyone so cursed becomes invulnerable and invincible, as is the case with Ladurlad, the wronged protagonist of *Kehama*.



May he live in the pangs which others die with! 435  
 And Death itself wax something worse than Death  
 To him who first acquainted him with man!  
 Hence, fratricide! henceforth that word is *Cain*,<sup>64</sup>  
 Through all the coming myriads of mankind,  
 Who shall abhor thee, though thou wert their sire! 440  
 May the Grass wither from thy feet! the Woods  
 Deny thee shelter! Earth a home! the Dust  
 A Grave! the Sun his light! and Heaven her God!<sup>65</sup>

*Exit Eve.*

Adam: Cain! get thee forth: we dwell no more together.  
 Depart! and leave the dead to me – I am 445  
 Henceforth alone – we never must meet more.  
 Adah: Oh, part not with him thus, my father: do not  
 Add thy deep curse to Eve’s upon his head!  
 Adam: I curse him not: his Spirit be his curse.  
 Come, Zillah!  
 Zillah: I must watch my husband’s corse. 450  
 Adam: We will return again, when he is gone  
 Who hath provided for us this dread office.  
 Come, Zillah!  
 Zillah: Yet one kiss on yon pale clay,  
 And those lips once so warm – my heart! my heart!

*Exeunt Adam and Zillah weeping.*

Adah: Cain! thou hast heard, we must go forth. I am ready, 455  
 So shall our children be. I will bear Enoch,  
 And you his sister. Ere the sun declines  
 Let us depart, nor walk the wilderness  
 Under the cloud of Night. – Nay, speak to me.  
 To me – thine own.  
 Cain: Leave me!  
 Adah: Why, all have left thee. 460  
 Cain: And wherefore lingerest thou? Dost thou not fear  
 To dwell with one who hath done this?  
 Adah: I fear  
 Nothing except to leave thee, much as I  
 Shrink from the deed which leaves thee brotherless.  
 I must not speak of this – it is between thee 465  
 And the great God.  
 A Voice from within exclaims: Cain! Cain!  
 Adah: Hear’st thou that voice?  
 The Voice within: Cain! Cain!  
 Adah: It soundeth like an Angels’ tone.

*Enter the Angel of the Lord.*<sup>66</sup>

**64:** Compare the end of *Troilus and Cressida* III ii, where all three characters prophesy the way their names will be used in future myths and sayings. But they are presented ironically.

**65:** Lines were added by B. in a letter to Murray of September 12th 1821: “To the last speech of Eve in the last act (i.e. where she curses Cain) add these three lines to the concluding one – [‘May ... God!’] There’s as pretty a piece of Imprecation for you, when joined to the lines already sent – as you may wish to meet with in the course of your business. – But don’t forget the addition of the above three lines which are clinchers to Eve’s speech” (BLJ VIII 206).

Angel: Where is thy brother Abel?  
Cain: Am I then  
My brother's keeper?  
Angel: Cain! what hast thou done?  
The voice of thy slain brother's blood cries out, 470  
Even from the ground, unto the Lord! – Now art thou  
Cursed from the Earth, which opened late her mouth  
To drink thy brother's blood from thy rash hand.  
Henceforth, when thou shalt till the ground, it shall not  
Yield thee her strength; a fugitive shalt thou 475  
Be from this day, and vagabond on Earth!  
Adah: This punishment is more than he can bear.<sup>67</sup>  
Behold thou drivest him from the face of Earth,  
And from the face of God shall he be hid.  
A fugitive and vagabond on Earth, 480  
'Twill come to pass, that whoso findeth him  
Shall slay him.  
Cain: Would they could! but who are they  
Shall slay me? Where are these on the lone Earth  
As yet unpeopled?  
Angel: Thou hast slain thy brother,  
And who shall warrant thee against thy son? 485  
Adah: Angel of Light! be merciful, nor say  
That this poor aching breast now nourishes  
A murderer in my boy, and of his father.  
Angel: Then he would but be what his father is.  
Did not the milk of Eve give nutriment 490  
To him thou now seest so besmeared with blood?  
The fratricide might well engender parricides. –  
But it shall not be so – the Lord thy God  
And mine commandeth me to set his seal  
On Cain, so that he may go forth in safety. 495  
Who slayeth Cain, a sevenfold vengeance shall  
Be taken on his head.<sup>68</sup> Come hither!  
Cain: What  
Wouldst thou with me?  
Angel: To mark upon thy brow  
Exemption from such deeds as thou hast done.  
Cain: No, let me die!  
Angel: It must not be.

*The Angel sets the mark on Cain's brow.*<sup>69</sup>

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**66:** The conservative B. stops short of bringing the Lord himself on to the stage, as his source would insist: "I have even avoided introducing the Deity – as in the Scriptures – (though Milton does and not very wisely either) but have adopted his Angel as sent to Cain instead – on purpose to avoid shocking any feelings on the subject by falling short – of what all uninspired men must fall short in – viz – giving an adequate notion of the effect of the presence of Jehovah. – – The Old Mysteries introduced him liberally enough – and all this is avoided in the New one" (BLJ IX 103).

**67:** Echoes Cain's own words at Genesis 4, 13: *My punishment is greater than I can bear.*

**68:** As, apart from those in this vicinity, there are as yet no people anywhere on earth, to banish Cain is the best way of saving his life. Bayle makes this point in his chapter on Cain: "... perhaps he only pretended he was afraid of finding Assassins every where in distant Countries ... in order to get the Punishment GOD had inflicted on him revoked, or commuted" (Bayle II 247: chapter on Cain, nA).



Give thee back this. – Now for the wilderness!

*Adah stoops down and kisses the body of Abel.*

Adah:	A dreary, and an early doom, my brother, Has been thy lot! Of all who mourn for thee, I alone must not weep. My office is Henceforth to dry up tears, and not to shed them; But yet of all who mourn, none mourn like me, Not only for thyself, but him who slew thee.	545     550
Cain:	Eastward from Eden will we take our way; 'Tis the most desolate, and suits my steps.	
Adah:	Lead! thou shalt be my guide, and may our God Be thine! Now let us carry forth our children.	555
Cain:	And <i>he</i> who lieth there was childless! I Have dried the fountain of a gentle race, Which might have graced his recent marriage couch, And might have tempered this stern blood of mine, Uniting with our children Abel's offspring! O Abel!	560
Adah:	Peace be with him!	
Cain:	But with <i>me!</i> <sup>70</sup> –	

*Exeunt.*

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**70:** Byron would have understood the future of the tribe of Cain to have been one of non-stop public homosexual orgying. *Genesis* 4, 17, tells us that Cain “builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch”. But, Bayle tells us, “*Josephus* affirms, that *Cain* was a voluptuous Man, and a Robber, and that his Descendants grew worse and worse. Add to what he hath said the Description that *Methodius* has given us of the Manners of that Race, and you will see there is very good reason to compare the City of *Enochia*, built by *Cain*, to that, which a certain *Macedonian* King built for a Receptacle of all sorts of wicked and dissolute People; whence it was called *Poneropolis*. Impiety so horribly prevailed among the descendants of Cain, that, not content to defile one another’s Marriage-Beds, and enjoy their Mistresses in public, and in the Sight of all who had a mind to see them, they broke through the Laws of Nature, and abandoned themselves, Men and Women, to the Sin of Non-Conformity ... *Men like mad Creatures ran headlong into all manner of abominable Uncleanliness and the Darkness of the Night, and privacy of a Chamber, not sufficing for their scandalous Actions, would act their Filthiness in open day, and, in the Presence and view of the People, practise odious Familiarities not to be named. — But the shameful Practices of that time were carried to such a length, as far exceeds the Bounds and Limits of Nature. It would be incredible, were it not asserted by Methodius, a grave and holy Author, that even then was introduced the Practice, which St Paul bewails in Idolaters, that Men with Men acted that which is unseemly, and Women burnt with Lust to Women*” (Bayle II 248: chapter on Cain, nC).

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**Productions.** Konstantin Stanislavsky, Moscow Arts Theatre, 1917

- Manhattan Little Theatre Club, 8th April 1925
- St. Giles Cathedral Edinburgh, 1951
- University of Zurich (April 1951)
- Frankfurt-am-Main, 1958, and Lucerne, 1960, Walter Oberer, director, Wolfgang Schwartz as Cain and Wolfgang Rottsieper as Lucifer
- BBC Third Programme, 25th September 1963
- Rockefeller Chapel, University of Chicago January 1968 (J.J.McGann and V.Burnett, "conceivers")
- Jerzy Grotowski, Theatre of 13 Rows, Poland, 1960
- Positive Theatre, Wordsworth Trust Grasmere, May 1989
- Version by John Barton, RSC Swan and Pit Theatres, 1995-6, Marcus d'Amico as Cain and John Carlisle as Lucifer (reviewed M.Simpson, ERR 8/1 44-6)
- Directed and slightly adapted by Samantha Keenan, Arts Theatre, University of New England, Armidale, 29th-31st May 1997, Bruce Blyth as Cain, Launt Thompson as Lucifer
- Directed by Slava Stepnov, Steps Theatre, New York, October 20<sup>th</sup>-November 12th 2000

**Rock Opera:** Passions of Cain by Aram Rian and others, Yerevan 1999