

Unto Temptation

Why is it that the Tempter is,
Himself, so little tempting? Faust
He offered youth, and Faust in tights
To Gretchen; tavern tunes for hymns
For Luther; Jesus on the heights
The cited wealth of all the world,
Which He refused. In human form,
As thief repentant, rival choice
For the Beloved Discipleship,
Might he have scored? The cloven hoof,
Unsightly horns, both miss the point,
In that they call for go-betweens:
Fruit, serpent, knowledge . . . One would think
That evil pure would have at least
Vain majesty and bold design:
A look of Lucifer, in shield
And shining armor. Uniforms
Are neither intervention, self,
Nor truth: are best foot forward, hoof
In cripple boot; and hornèd head
Fortunate Fall in Roman helm.
Hell being waterless, Narcissus'
Fate is not a threat should Vice
Give over its so frightful mien
To be seduction on its own
By virtue of a visage art
Avoids, and Milton carefully
Does not describe. It speaks as might

A looking glass. "Look at me, Cain.
You see the face of murderers
Who sleep well, certain of their course;
See, Judas, years of usury,
Yourself rich in the countinghouse.
Salt wife of Lot, see, grain by grain
Encrypted, segments of your past.
See, Herod, efficacious, praised,
The wisdom of infanticide."