

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Ammar Telidji of Laghouat
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
The Department of English



John Milton's Inspiration, Ingenuity and Bona Fides

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the Requirements of Master Degree.

Submitted by: Mr. Boussebia Houssam Eddine **Supervised by:** Mrs. Boumousse Moufida

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Dedication

For my parents

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisor Mrs. Boumousse Moufida for her encouraging spirit.

I would like to thank the board of the jury for reading, correcting and examining my work.

I write with deep gratitude and great humility for anyone who values, admires and cherishes education as I thank God for all His simplifications.

Abstract

This dissertation will delve into the traces and persons behind John Milton's inspiration, the English poet. It will also shed light on the creativity, honesty and sincerity in his works. Through comparing and contrasting with his predecessors, this study will depict Milton as a true unique poet. Then glances on how these predecessors had such immense influence on him. In three chapters, this study will attempt to show how he put together his inspiring thoughts in a tangible work such as *Paradise Lost* and will compasses more interesting facts.

المخلص:

تتعقب هذه الدراسة الآثار و الأشخاص وراء الهام الشاعر الانجليزي جون ملتون مسطرة الأضواء على قدراته الإبداعية الخلاقة و النزاهة و الإخلاص في أعماله الأدبية من خلال المقارنة و التضاد مع أعمال أسلافه. كما تصور هذه الدراسة ملتون كشاعر فريد من نوعه متميز ملقية نظرات خاطفة على سيرات أسلافه و كيف كان لهم الفضل في التأثير عليه . في ثلاث فصول ستحاول هذه الدراسة أن تظهر كيف جسد ملتون أفكاره الملهمة في قصيدته الملحمية *Paradise Lost*.

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General Introduction:

During the seventeenth century, England was a place of fine arts and literature and a matriarch of astonishing poets and authors. John Milton, a polemicist and a civil servant for the commonwealth of England, was one of the seminal, unique and most influential poets in this era solely for his imaginative, aesthetic, and intellectual endeavouring. Milton was a poet who reinforced his wisdom by both reading and travelling. Where, he had to deal with many works that inspired him such as Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*, Homer's *The Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid* and a major influence from the Classics. He was also a man of religion who was ultimately influenced by not just the Christian Bible but the Judaic Midrash too. Milton's *Paradise Lost* was an unprecedented masterpiece that reshaped the literary vision in England. Milton was so brilliant that he had to be repressed in order for those like Alexander Pope and John Dryden to write. It was not until the Romantics that this work of art began to affect influencing many poets such as William Wordsworth, Blake and Samuel Coleridge.

This work aims to scrutinise, explore and to supplement a wider comprehension on who inspired Milton and how this inspiration was considerably reflected in John Milton's works. It is pleasant for any literary alumni to read Milton's works such as *Paradise Lost* or *Paradise Regained*. However, it is more pleasurable when they are carefully studied because these alumni will notably acquire such a higher level of diction, explore different levels of comprehension and deal with its semantics. Yet, if one attempts to view Milton's works from another angle with the appliance of the critical thinking skill, he will then be exposed to the recognition of how much similarities are there in these works with others'. They will notice how much onerous efforts were spent to find and achieve such historical writings with tremendous creativity and faithfulness.

I have come to choosing this topic because since my infancy I had a strong passion for English literature and the history of literature. This is how my journey began to reading about

other great poets as Edmund Spenser, John Donne and John Milton in relationship with their impact on popular culture and certainly the English Literature. I have read some of Milton's works like *Paradise Lost* which was very mesmerising especially its Blank Verse, themes, the divinity that this work holds and the way history of men's creation and universe is rewritten. After writing on his conceit and paradox years ago, I thought how wonderful it is to continue reading about Milton and further explore his personality as a worth-while research. It is aspirational to portray how one's desire and obsession for reading can be so enlightening.

Central to this study are the questions: to which extent is John Milton creative and original? Are his works repetitive and similar to his predecessors or are they portraying Milton's creativity and faithfulness? Therefore, we begin to hypothesise that John Milton was truly inspired by his predecessors as well as Judaism and Christianity also *Paradise Lost* is an embodiment of previous works. Furthermore, Milton has been inventive, original and faithful in his writings.

Homer's *the Iliad and The Odyssey* and Dante's *Inferno* and Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* are some of the greatest works of literature and major classics. Therefore, a great number of successive poets have been influenced and inspired by these works using them as biblical, historical and theological references. Among these writers is John Milton who caused many scholars and literary critics to dispute this subject of influence and inspiration.

John Milton, the man of letters and the loyal civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under Oliver Cromwell In the seventeenth century, is still an arousing figure of curiosity. He was quite interesting for many literary critics who have always endeavoured in their pursuit of bringing a conceptual understanding and clear deciphering of his work. For this subject area, there are many authors and poets with different high grades who have dedicated their whole lifetime writing books and volumes as well on John Milton.

Some critics have deduced, in their studies, evaluations, and interpretations that John Milton had an unlatched reception of influence. Marilyn Arnold (1976), Brigham Young University, had come up with several interpretations stating that Milton was inspired from a variety of precedential poets and thinkers such as *Publius Vergilius Maro* or Virgil, Homer, Alighieri Dante and even Galileo Galilei. In this regard, she claims that during the seventeenth century appeared many doctrinal points which we shouldn't be expected to agree upon; however, she highlights *Paradise Lost* as the one that corroborates truths as well as a restored gospel.

Another critic sharing the same opinion, David Masson (1877), who has paid considerable contribution in his formidable works for literature and that of Milton precisely, stated that John Milton's was of a psychological readiness and a fertile thinker for all foreign influences either Greek, Italian or even English. From his perspective, one can hardly begin his quest of knowing the subtle tokens of conduct that are present in Milton's life and work because Milton's "ingenuity" or creativity was unprecedented.

Raymond Dexter Havens (1961), University of Rochester, however deemed Milton's influence as a potent force in political, religious and literary fields in addition to his traces found along the eighteenth as well as nineteenth century poets. Havens sheds light on *Paradise Lost* for its numerous unique characteristics and its long-lasting influence which had appeared on later poets such as John Keats, William Blake and Wordsworth works.

William Kolbrener (1997), Bar-Ilan University, provides a critical account of the reception and interpretation of Milton's texts. He argues that the governing scheme of Milton criticism derives from historiographical tradition rooted in the Enlightenment, classicism and mysticism. The Enlightenment antithesis between reason and authority, Kolbrener argues, he has generated a set of interpretive approaches that inevitably end up violating the meaning of Milton's texts. Kolbrener shows how Milton articulates his thought in lexicons which are never fully

assimilable to paradigms of modernity drawn from the Enlightenment. Instead, Milton's prose and poetry mediate between apparently contradictory positions.

According to the different views of the aforementioned critics, one will begin to accept that John Milton is the type of poet with the largest tremendous influence. He was influenced from all his predecessors who had different interpretations of life, mythology, religion and politics. Then, he transmitted it through his works to his up-coming successors. Themes however have also been affected. Many researchers, such as Oscar Kuhns (1898), have found evidence wherein Milton had borrowed and applied some of these themes in his works implicitly.

Milton's works have been punctuated by a great number of other literary works. Although Milton was intellectual enough to conceal apparent evidence, some critics for example have found in *Paradise lost* some shapes and meanings, allusion, quotation and calque, pastiche and parody that have existed before within either literary works or within Religious conventions.

It is mandatory for any research to have a strongly founded and a reliable critical approach. This is why our dissertation will follow a critical approach which is thought to be the best means towards providing concrete, empirical and credible findings. This approach is the qualitative approach which will work in unison and correlation with some investigations and analyses.

This research study will be built up of chapters that discuss the different aspects of John Milton's inspiration and ingenuity. The first will portray Milton's poetical precursors and religions along with their most impetuous influence. As for the second, it will carefully analyse these works and their embodiments in Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a study case. The third chapter will be mainly religious showing how Milton largely borrowed from the Hebraic traditions and Christianity.

CHAPTER I

John Milton's Predominant Religions and Precursors

Introduction

1. John Milton's Luminaries

- 1.1. Homer
- 1.2. Publius Vergilius Maro, Virgil
- 1.3. Publius Ovidius Naso, Ovid
- 1.4. Durante Degli Alighieri, Dante
- 1.5. Ludovico Ariosto

2. Milton's Influential Religions

- 2.1. Christianity
- 2.2. Judaism

Conclusion

Introduction:

In this chapter, the subject area of John Milton's utmost inspiration is framed and narrowed down to the most striking names in literature along with their influential works. Moreover, it exposes exactly the works that have inspired Milton to start off with his writings such as *Paradise Lost*.

1. Milton's Luminaries:

John Milton's inspiring poets were those whose works have strongly influenced the Western culture.

1.1. Homer:

Among the chief poets, Homer is the author of the classic literary works of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He is considered to be the greatest epic poet in history. Homer's Poems have had a huge influence on the history of literature. Homer's poems were passed from one generation to another by means of oral communication. It is difficult for historians to date the works but it is generally accepted that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written by Homer around the eighth century B.C. The *Iliad* tells the legendary story of the first Trojan War and the *Odyssey* tells the journey of the hero Odysseus to his home island Ithaca after the war was over (Pulleyn). The stories were first written down in Greek but now they are translated into almost every written language. They are still the basis of many studies of Western Literature. Their influence on Western Literature is unparalleled and the poems are still studied to this day. (2000)¹

¹ Pulleyn, Simon. *Homer Iliad I*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

According to Colin Burrow, Oxford University, The Iliad consists of twenty-four scrolls that contain 15,693 lines of dactylic hexameter verse. The whole poem has a slight change from one line to another. (1993)²

In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the immortal gods and goddesses are imaged as fictional characters. The gods tend to show in their behaviour the sense of individuality and will as they are also religious figures. The gods seem to have a complicated relationship with humans. They are used as alternative characters in order to make a comparison or a binary opposition to humans for the readers to understand. (Burrow 1993)

Themes in these poems are entirely of war or peace, primarily, on the struggling and fighting. Heroism and glory are also implemented to reckon other minor themes such as glamour and love. Throughout the poems, one can see that theme of war is highly emphasised. Some literary critics say that Homer is abhorred with war, hate and death. The latter was evident when Homer opened the *Iliad* with the Greek word *menin* or *menis* meaning wrath. One of the major themes of the poem is seen when Achilles³ is coming to an acceptance with his anger and taking responsibility for his actions and emotion as means for human values to be reminded. (Burrow 1993)

Many characters in the *Iliad* represent different values, accounts Martin Mueller. Achilles for example, represents heroism, bravery and honour as opposed to Agamemnon⁴ whose main reliance is on royal privilege. Homer sought to depict the fight for honour as the questionable matter. (1980)⁵

² Burrow, Colin. *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

³ In Greek mythology, Achilles was a Greek hero of the Trojan War and the central character and greatest warrior of Homer's *Iliad*.

⁴ In Greek mythology, Agamemnon was the son of King Atreus

⁵ Mueller, Martin. *The Tragic Epic: Paradise Lost and the Iliad*. (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1980)

1.2. Publius Vergilius Maro:

Ancient Roman literature has long been quite influential on English Literature. During the Augustan period and around 50 BC, Virgil became widely known for his epic poems. His major and the most famous work was his epic poem the *Aeneid*. Till this day, The *Aeneid* remains his national epic. During the Augustan period, the historian Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus and the two great grammarians Maurus Servius Honoratus and Aelius Donatus were those who were accredited for their efforts to archive Roman history. Thus, they are today's most reliable sources for the Roman Empire, Culture and religion. Virgil was contemporaneous with the Imperial Era. It is why themes of war are seen along the *Aeneid*. According to Virgil's editor Lucius Varius Rufus (60BC)⁶ or , Varius, the *Aeneid* is *sculptura* after Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It mimics the Aeneas⁷ the protagonist of *Aeneid*, the Trojan refugee, in his fight for finding a new home in Italy. Of course, Western literature is deeply affected by Virgil's poetry precisely the *Aeneid*. As an illustration, the *Divine Comedy* of Dante witnesses Virgil as a chief character guiding Dante through the gates of Hell and Purgatory. Ordway Julia, Boston University, makes an affinity between Milton and Virgil stating that "We see in the same long and devoted preparation, the same purpose and aspiration," (1912)⁸

Virgil in his most interesting events of the *Aeneid*, forces his character Aeneas to find a new refugee for the remaining survivors after the devastation of Italy. During this voyage, their ship gets spotted by Juno⁹ who has strong grievance and hatred for the Trojans. Juno is aware of the destiny of these men to be potential Romans and destroy her most pleasant city, Carthage. Juno conspires with the god of the winds and asks for a destructive storm. Aeneas asks for the help of his mother Venus who is the goddess of connections. So, she leads him to Carthage's

⁶ Hollis, A. S. "*Virgil's Friend Varius Rufus*" (1996).

⁷ In Greco-Roman mythology, Aeneas was a Trojan hero, the son of the prince Anchises and the goddess Venus

⁸ Ordway, Julia. *The Influence of Virgil upon the Minor Poems of Milton* (Boston University: 1912).

⁹ In Greco-Roman mythology, Juno is the queen of the gods, the wife and sister of Jupiter, and the daughter of Saturn

most beautiful queen Dido who has been widowed. Venus makes their meeting full of love thanks to Amor¹⁰. Virgil and Milton apply themes of war, love and seduction in parallel. Dido is seduced and falls in Aeneas love. Jupiter¹¹ sends Mercury¹² to remind Aeneas to found a new city on Carthage, so when Aeneas does what he is told, Dido commits suicide. After many incidents, Aeneas decides to sail to Cumae, the Bay of Naples, in order to visit the prophetess Sibyl who eventually leads him to the underworld and meet with his dead father Anchises and his beloved queen Dido.

The most striking themes in the *Aeneid* are Morality, power, warfare and love. The *Aeneid* is a deep embodiment of love. It portrays love as strong unpredictable driving force. Virgil tends to remind us that love is both destructive and distractive. This is seen when Dido falls in Aeneas love. This love is shown along the epic poem as a private emotional matter which always interferes within social and political compass. The aforementioned is seen when the love of the queen for Aeneas is quite distracting to the extent that he forgets to found a new city. At the same time, the poet shows that love can yet be as a mean for motivation and encouragement. This was apparent when Nisus dies in an attempt to rescue his beloved friend, Euryalus. Virgil pictures war differently than his precursor Homer and his successor Milton. Homeric war is shown as an innate side within mankind; however, Virgil's war is a negative horrible way to make peace as he states that "A greater history opens before my eyes, / A greater task awaits me.". Milton's tragedy is revenge. The theme of war comes to fulfil the need for revenge such as when Satan seeks revenge from God.

¹⁰ In the *Aeneid*, Amor is the personification of love.

¹¹ In Greco-Roman mythology, Jupiter is the King of gods

¹² In Greco-Roman mythology, Mercury is the messenger of God

1.3. Publius Ovidius Naso:

Around 43 A.D, Ovid became distinctly one of the best known artists in the Roman Empire and Latin literature. Subsequent to holding brief judicial posts as a young fellow, Ovid swung to composing verses. Some of his works, for example, were the *Ars amatoria* and *Metamorphoses* that are exceptionally prominent in Western Literature. His father had desires for him: entering governmental issues and turning into an incredible orator. Be that as it may, Ovid dismissed his studies only to have full dedication for poetry.

Maggie Kilgour, Oxford University, argues that Ovid's most aspiring and famous work is his *Metamorphoses*. This extremely lengthy poem is of fifteen books totalling almost 12,000 lines written in dactylic hexameter in addition to the implication of 250 myths. It is a gathering of mythological and legendary stories in which Metamorphosis' change has some impact. The poem narrates the time from the primal chaos and the making of the Earth and the sea. It also speaks of the humankind and his struggle to subdue his desires like sex and rape. (2012)¹³

Ovid describes the shifts of the whole world that is constantly in flux. He compares it to the passions of human beings. A man possessed by rage, hunger or by lust becomes a kind of an animal at the same time worshipping gods in the tree-line sanctuary. According to Maggie Kilgour in her *Milton and The Metamorphosis of Ovid*, nothing rests and everything moves and changes. Ovid invented an extraordinary form of describing the shiftiness of the universe. Ovid addresses gods in *Metamorphoses* and requests his sacred pledge to have their blessings. After that, Ovid begins his tale of transformations by describing how everything was created out of chaos. He describes the development and progression of how mankind has degenerated from the Golden Age, the Silver Age and the Age of Iron. The Immoral behaviour of mankind leads the giants to occupy the heavens. As a rebuttal to this corruption, Jove sends a great flood to the earth

¹³ Kilgour, Maggie. *Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012).

destroying all living creatures except one pious couple: Deucalion¹⁴ and Pyrrha¹⁵. It was this couple who then repopulates the earth. They obeyed the orders of gods and threw rocks behind them; these rocks transformed into a new hearty breed of man. Ovid himself borrowed from the tale of Daphne¹⁶ and Apollo. Yet, Ovid borrows how Apollo's non-mutual love had led to *Daphne* transformation into a laurel tree. Meanwhile, Inachus¹⁷ daughter whose name is Io have been raped by Jove who transforms her into a cow to protect her from the jealousy of Juno. Explicitly, this poem holds many themes of adultery, sex and excitement in such a vivid description. Ovid had no censorship in his epic poem as he depicts how all the metamorphoses of gods who rape innocent human women. Ultimately, this aspect of rape was witnessed in subsequent great works.

Luke Mastin argues that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* long survived after the fall of Rome in 476 A.D. It was globally read across several ages from the Middle Ages till the Renaissance. *Metamorphoses* faced a dispute of heresy about the picture of the gods when Rome and much of Western Europe embraced Christianity. Ovid's poem was threatening. In Christianity, God is imaged in a picture of a man. Christianity vehemently denies human beings portrayed as beasts or stones. Christian priests rejected this sort of ideas as being importunate for pagan culture. Although Ovid wrote centuries before the Renaissance, Dante's *Divine Comedy* still reveals how influential Ovid is. In Dante's work, individuals are disfigured by sin or transfigured by the love of a Christian God. (2009)¹⁸

¹⁴ in Greek legends, the Greek equivalent of Noah, the son of Prometheus

¹⁵ In Greek mythology, she was the daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora and wife of Deucalion.

¹⁶ A minor figure and female Nymph in Greek Mythology

¹⁷ In Greek mythology, he was the 1st King of Argo

¹⁸ Mastin, Luke. "*Ancient Rome-Ovid- Metamorphoses*" (2009).

1.4. Dante Alighieri:

Dante Alighieri is certainly a vital figure and a great Italian poet of the Late Middle Ages. His *Divine Comedy* is so far the greatest work in the world of literature that is written in Italian language in a number of *Cantos*¹⁹. It was completed by the year of 1320, preceding his unfortunate death in 1321. This poem influenced a great number of poets. It has a very strong imaginative vision of the afterlife, Hell and Heaven, God and Satan, and the whole universe. It had broadened the Middle Ages' philosophy of life and the conception of the world reaching the Western Church by the 14th century. The *Divine Comedy* is a series of epic poems that are divided into three parts: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.

The *Inferno* is a one unique epic poem. It narrates a voyage through Hell of Dante. Dante is therefore the protagonist being directed through Hell and Purgatory by the ancient Roman poet Virgil (Dante19). It is at this point where Hell, that is located within the Earth, is depicted as nine different concentric circles of sufferance that represent a gradual increase in wickedness. The whole *Divine Comedy* is itself a virtual journey of the soul toward God in an overpass of sin rejection and recognition. This shows that even Dante admires classical literature, thus inspired by Classical literature. One can envisage how the *inferno* is full of themes of hate, despair and the misanthropy of the author. This poem reflects the Catholic theology of the medieval period. One should recall that Dante was well-aware of cosmology of Ptolemy. This was notably seen among his *Divine Comedy*.

There are other central characters in the *Inferno*. These characters are Beatrice²⁰, Boniface²¹ VIII, Frederick II²², and Satan. Some of these characters are fictional who are

¹⁹ The *canto* is a principal form of division in a long poem

²⁰ Dante's muse who had died almost 25 years before the *Inferno* was finished.

²¹ A corrupt and arrogant Pope, he represents the corrupt status of the church.

²² A holy brave Roman Emperor who died before Dante's epoch

combating against non-fictional characters. War and war-weariness is every character's struggle. It is obscure for readers although it is explicitly portrayed. Poets like Dante seek to show that every character has a sanction to dispose. They are careful with their characters in that each character must implicitly represent something.

The *terza rima* is the poem's rhyme scheme. Each stanza is made of three lines that have eleven syllables each. This is like the iambic pentameter but with a muted syllable at the end of each line. Dante attempted something so pretentious. He wrote in the vernacular. This was a first in the Italian literature making him a source of inspiration for later poets. (Ciardi)²³

1.5. Ludovico Ariosto:

Ludovico Ariosto is another great transformative figure who has been present during the sixteenth century. Ariosto immensely contributed to the rise of modern Italian and European literature. The former was due to his grand piece of the *Orlando Furioso* which is, however, a model to look forward to. It is an originator of regular comedy and a return to satire as a genre. He was an intellectual who lived with tension and effort to find such an autonomous space of his own to show his dedication to literature. *Orlando Furioso* should be considered exemplary.

Ovid is the type of poet whose romance exposed to literature a new national dimension. He introduced new themes when western literature dispelled. His work also contributed to the foundation of Italian Classicism and constituted an example of consolidation for literary genres. The *Orlando Furioso* is published into several editions. It was published in 1516 and was revised twice in 1521 and 1532 (Greene 152)²⁴.

²³ Ciardi, John. *The Divine Comedy, Introduction* by Archibald T. MacAllister, (New York: Modern Library, inc, 2009).

²⁴ Greene, Robert. *The Historie of Orlando Furioso* (Oxford University Press, 1592).

Almost every Italian poem seems to have multiple editions. The latter certainly is an abstract proof for the efforts of the great Italian poets. Thus, it sends a message for other poets around the world, that in order to write such a thing as a poet, you must publish it in multiple editions. This was understood by John Milton when he announced his second edition of *Paradise Lost*.

Orlando Furioso is itself surprisingly inspired from another work. It is considered as a sequel to Matteo Maria Boiardo's epic poem *Orlando Innamorato*. *Orlando Furioso* is somewhat different since all the actions occur in the background of the Christian emperor Charlemagne in Europe and the Saracen King of Africa. An invader comes to Europe to avenge his father's death named Agramante. It is apparent here that the theme of revenge of death is highly emphasised. Agramante has many allies. These allies are Marsilio, the King of Spain, and the boastful warrior Rodomonte who besieges Charlemagne in Paris. One can see that Ariosto uses the aspect of making alliances among characters to defeat a certain enemy. This aspect has drawn the intention of many poets such as John Milton. For the time being, Orlando who is Charlemagne's most famous paladin is being tempted to forget his duty of protecting his emperor because of his strong love for a pagan princess called Angelica (Ariosto 301). Love and temptation alike in this poem are such prominent aspects which Ariosto uses to immerse the reader into excitement and suspense. Once more, it was this novelty that some poets sought to apply in their works like John Milton.

The beginning of the poem tells how Angelica escapes from the castle of the Bavarian Duke Namor. Orlando, then, begins his journey for her return. The aforementioned shows traces of disobedience of Angelica when she escapes in order to meet her beloved one, Orlando. Although

this sort of love was a sin during Ariosto's times as the two meet in various adventures. Angelica falls in love with Medoro²⁵ and escapes with him to Cathay.

Orlando, after being informed of the treachery, is sunken in despair. He begins in ordering a massive destruction upon Europe. Astolfo²⁶ is given the onus to travel on a Hippogriff²⁷ to Ethiopia to find an analgesic for Orlando's madness. He flies to the moon on Elijah²⁸'s flaming chariot. Here, what has been lost on earth will be found. Orlando sniffs a bottle that is brought by Astolfo which restores his sanity and wits.

This Epic poem had a strong impact due to the many numerous subplots, minor characters, twists, and fantasies (Stoppino 187)²⁹.

Orlando Furioso was typically written in the *Ottava Rima* Rhyming scheme. It consists of stanzas of eight lines of ten or eleven syllables. During this era, this kind of rhyming was radically new. Those like Luis de Camões (1572) in his epic poem *the Lusiad* and Torquato Tasso (1581) in his *Jerusalem Delivered*, have founded their poems based on this type of rhyming scheme. However, this had been witnessed on the writings of the major poets of the seventeenth century like John Milton.

2. Milton's Influential Religions

Religions and their beliefs seem to have an influence on English writings during the Seventeenth century.

²⁵ a wounded Saracen knight whom Angelica saves in secret

²⁶ a fictional character and one of Charlemagne's paladins

²⁷ a legendary creature which has the front half of an eagle and the hind half of a horse

²⁸ a prophet and a miracle worker who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel

²⁹ Stoppino, Eleanora. *Genealogies of Fiction: Women Warriors and the Dynastic Imagination in the Orlando Furioso* (New York: Fordham University Press 2012).

2.1.Christianity:

During the 17th century, Christianity witnessed profound conflict and new tolerance. By the Enlightenment age, a growth to challenging Christianity and its beliefs began among the mass to highlight reason above divine revelation. (2008)³⁰

Christianity had both, negative and positive long term influence especially on the history and the culture of the English Civilisation although. The Bible too was responsible for the quality of language, literature and fine arts which were heavily influenced by its writings.

Christianity made a radical change onto the Life and the religious beliefs of England; it is also accredited for bringing a new kind of Literature. The Christian influence contributed to the rise of new creative era in England by the 17th century marked by remarkable literary developments. Bardhan says that “The tone and spirit of English Literature had changed greatly” begetting a new type of poetry which had the best of both Teutonic and Christian worlds. (2013)³¹

According to her, Christianity had strongly influenced English poetry. The poets became satisfied with the addition of Christian beliefs to their poetry. Poets like Milton made a break with the traditions seeking new subjects for their poetry derived from the stories of the Bible and the quotidian life of the saints in Church. So, the form of poetry stayed the same; yet the subject got thoroughly changed.

Bardhan (2013) makes it clear that “Christianity introduced the literature of praise and prayer.” This is seen in Milton’s praise, *A Fair Infant*, and the exultation of Caedmon’s and Cynewulf’s poems. Christianity, however, presented a new genre of sorrow to English poetry, for sin and the sloth of life.

³⁰ Rubaraj, Daniel. “*The Influence of Christianity on English Literature.*” (2008).

³¹ Bardhan, Shreya. “*Christian Influence in English Poetry*” (2013).

2.2.Judaism:

According to Edward Nathaniel Calisch, the Seventeenth century was an eventful one in the history of Jews in England. The readmission of the Jews into England began as a pure theological motivation, not on the basis of gaining freedom nor justice. Literature dealing with such topic fully reflects this religious persecution since they were opposed on religious grounds. (1909)³²

As Calisch maintains, since the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth century, both biblical and Hebraic largely influenced English culture. The Hebrew bible was very inspiring during the era of Puritanism, and Anglican piety which led to a new judgement of Jews and Hebrew scriptures alike. The Puritans were, thus attracted to the Psalms and the records of the Judges of Israel³³. John Milton, their archetypal, in his epic *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Samson Agonistes* (1671) are “steeped in biblical and Judaic lore”. Milton's *Samson Agonistes* portrays a heroic Jew of the Bible, as part of self-portrait of the poet himself. During the Seventeenth century, this was a new phenomenon.

Conclusion:

Homer, Dante, Ariosto and Ovid are all the most prominent poets who have inspired some of the major works of John Milton such as *Paradise Lost*. They all spoke about the very first creation of men and presented God in different ways. All these poets, in their works, have applied a variety of vivid themes of war, death, treachery, despair, or rape. They portrayed the Gods in a humanoid figure, based their works on a major hero character, and showed a quest for the use of new ways of rhyming.

³² Calisch, Edward.N. *The Jews in English Literature: As Author and as Subject* (Virginia: The Bell Book and Stationery, 1909).

³³ Book of Judges mentions twelve leaders who judged Israel such as Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon.

CHAPTER II

John Milton's Inspirational Role Models, Creativity and Faithfulness

Introduction

1. John Milton's Inspirational Role Models, Creativity and Faithfulness

- 1.1.** Homer's Inheritance for Milton
- 1.2.** Virgil as Milton's Spiritual Father
- 1.3.** Ovid, Milton's Chief Idol
- 1.4.** Dante and his Acquaintance to Milton
- 1.5.** Ariosto and his Influential Romance

Conclusion

Introduction:

This chapter will be discussing the major literary figures and their aspirational influence that have affected John Milton. In this regard, it will show the main aspects, in *Paradise Lost*, as to clarify in which portion John Milton was exactly influenced using concrete examples from different works.

1. John Milton's Inspirational Role Models, Creativity and Faithfulness:

John Milton was inspired by many ancient poets. However, he was creative and at the same time faithful to make his very own anthological compendium *Paradise Lost*.

1.1. Homer's Inheritance for Milton:

Some writers are attracted to the advocating of Good and Evil as a strong tie. The latter implicates a conflict between the two and ensures a novelty of each of their representation though the genesis of each. Homer uses the aggravation form of this conflict. The setting is war in his *Iliad*, similarly, John Milton explicitly puts it through the clash between Satan and God. This essential similarity between these major Epics provides ground for Inspiration. The fact that Milton borrowed from The *Iliad* in its central action construction, *Paradise Lost* is therefore the Secondary epic. However, modern readers' experience proved that *Paradise Lost* did not merely reiterate the ideas of The *Iliad*, yet strengthening them. The *Iliad* and *Paradise Lost* now function as symbionts. A proof for Milton's ingenuity is seen in the aforementioned statement.

In *Paradise Lost*, the representation of the theme of good and evil entombed in the intricate interweaving of the two. God is the only zenith of good and the crest of evil. "A universe of death! which God by curse, Created evil, for evil only good" (Milton 47). Evil was created when Lucifer got transformed into Satan and when God hurled him and his disciples out of Heaven. For this matter, God creates Hell. God does not hold the responsibility of making Evil,

yet responsible for its birth. Therefore, the existence of Evil is to serve as a nemesis that facilitates the triumph of Good.

The *Iliad* has no result for the Trojan War. This was intentionally done to show that none of the Achaeans and Trojans is portrayed as evil or good. It is the Character that should intrinsically struggle for this. Achilles' wrath for Briseis is considered as Evil. It is this anger that brought his prophesied downfall. Agamemnon, also, is blinded by his pride in being the "lord of the far-flung kingdoms" that made him reject making peace with Achilles. This implicit evil can be also seen in *Paradise Lost*. Milton uses the fundamental sin of pride to remove any interpretation of Satan being the epic hero. According to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, it says that the epic hero is "a man who on some occasion betrays the marks of a great pride or of remarkable nobility" However, it is the frequent use of the adjective *obdurate* that describes Satan's character that has strong dignity and pride. This is unacceptable in Greek mythology. It is termed as *Hybris* in Classical mythology. *Hybris* is the deadliest among the Seven Deadly Sins, and frequently punished by the Gods.

Satan is a great embodiment of all the other features of an epic hero that has been exemplified by archetypes such as Achilles, Agamemnon, Hector and Patroclus. Homer tends to use epic similes to illustrate their qualities as being larger than life, courage, defiance, and possessing an unconquerable will.

Homer uses a simile for both warriors showing Hector's strength and Ajax's fighting skills through Zeus' might. Milton as well used the Homeric simile that is "an extended simile often running to several lines, used typically in epic poetry to intensify the heroic stature of the subject and to serve as decoration"³⁴ to describe Satan's physical grandiose sketching "His ponderous shield, Ethereal temper, Massy, large and round, behind him cast; the broad

³⁴ Epic simile." *Encyclopædia Britannica* . N.p., 17 Sept. 1999. Web. 31 July (2016).

circumference, Hung on his shoulders like the moon,” (Milton 11). Satan is described to be rooted in self-pride that causes his gradual moral, physical degeneration and narcissism.

Eve is blamed for bringing the fall of men as she tastes the Forbidden Fruit. Milton therefore condemns Eve and all women for her obstinacy, vanity and ignorance, and mainly for luring Adam into committing a Sin. Homer moulds Helen into a similar role in *The Iliad*.

These two epics discuss two major events that are interesting. They both have similar settings for the hero. The rage of Peleus and the fall of man both show a struggle for their relapse and demise which is the essence of both epics. Thus, Milton succeeded in capturing the central sphere of Homer’s plot. Milton invoked the Muse to guide him in his prolific endeavour. The very same thing is in Homer’s *Iliad*. The beginning of the *Iliad* resembles *Paradise Lost*’s. The translation of the *Iliad* begins with:

The wrath do thou sing, O Goddess, of Peleus' son of Achilles, that baneful wrath which brought countless woes upon the Achaeans, and sent forth to Hades to be a spoil for dogs and all manner of birds; and thus the will of Zeus was being brought to fulfilment;—Sing thou thereof from the time when at the first there parted in strife Atreus' son, king of men, and goodly Achilles. (Line 1-12)

as the preamble of *Paradise Lost* starts with:

*Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing heavenly muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos: (Line 1-10)*

The only way to decipher this is to scrutinize both stanzas that share the same synopsis. The *Iliad* starts off with determining the main reason behind the countless woe brought by Achilles wrath upon Achaeans. Then, Hades is given the onus to undo this woe. Therefore, Zeus' will bring relief upon the people. Directly after that, Homer celebrates bless of God saying "Sing thou thereof from the time when at the first there parted in strife Atreus". At the end, Homer shows his longings to Astraeus and Achilles. In *Paradise Lost*, we see that Milton is highlighting the first sin committed when God's oath with Adam was broken. This brought mankind to fall from Heaven to Earth. Similarly to Homer, Milton John says "Brought death into this world, and all our woe" which is almost identical with Homer's "that baneful wrath which brought countless woes upon..." After that, Milton refers to a prophecy of a one man who is supposed to restore men's bless from God. The latter is like Hades' request to Zeus. Milton too in his "Sing heavenly muse, that on the secret top..." celebrates with the arrival of Muses as a saviour and as a shepherd of men.

1.2. Virgil as Milton's Spiritual Father:

Milton holds a strong indebtedness for Virgil. "Milton had been nourished upon the classics until they had become a part of the tissue of his brain", says Ordway Julia. She also argues that "He was Virgil's spiritual child by nature and education" (1912). It is true, the sense of intertextuality between the two great poets' work can be felt surely when carefully examining the poems. The form and the subject of the two poets resemble each other. In addition, the use of the mythological references along with the rhetorical figures and diction's facets are similar to Latin.

Milton's diction and rhetoric show some subtle traces from the *Aeneid*. According to William Bridges (1978) in his *A Milton encyclopaedia* mentions that "Milton's debt to the *Aeneid* is almost as vast as his debt to Homer" the *Aeneid* is somewhat of a larger pervasion than the

Iliad and the *Odyssey*. Milton's style seems to be the English equivalent for the rhetoric and diction of the *Aeneid*.

Paradise Lost tends to embody two kinds of classicism. K. W. Gransden argues that the first is the omnipresence in structure, language and syntax of the *Aeneid*. While the second is its deliverance of an infrastructure for *Paradise Lost*. Since the *Aeneid* of Virgil is the first palimpsest teleological epic, Milton's *Paradise Lost* supersedes the *Aeneid*'s teleology of Christian heroism rather than the Roman heroism. (1967)³⁵

Virgil was initially the first who took his models of female disloyalty, infidelity, and impiety. Eve is a Nausicaa and yet a Helen and a Dido. When Milton sought to invoke the horror of her impious act, he turned to that *monstrum horrendum* of Virgil. Virgil greatly expanded the epic sense of time, yet Milton added the flavour of eternity. This is the creative side of Milton. Both poets anticipated a future time that would in some measure redeem the suffering of the present. Thus the prophetic books with which *Paradise Lost* ends are deeply indebted to Virgil and his interest in history. In both poems major events that already occurred such as the founding of Rome and the coming of Christ are treated as a future event. Therefore, it enhanced their climatic importance as a shaping influence. For Virgil, the flowering of the Roman Empire was the purpose of history; for Milton, the Redemption was the central and the climatic event that would fulfil history and terminate it. A small Example of the way Milton built upon Virgil's prophetic theme occurs in *Paradise Lost* when Michael speaks to Adam on Christ's advent "he shall ascend The Throne hereditary, and bound his Reign With earth's wide bounds, his Glory with the Heav'ns." Here, Milton is building on a model of Jupiter's utterances to Venus from the *Aeneid*. Passages in the *Aeneid* inspired Milton. Virgil says "*nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar, imperium Oceano, Famam qui terminet astris, Iulius, a mango demissum nomen Iulo*".

³⁵ Gransden, K. W. *Virgil: The Aeneid Landmarks of World Literature II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004).

When we translate this to modern English, it should be as follows, “From this Noble line shall be born the Trojan Caesar, who shall limit his empire with ocean, his glory with the stars, A Julius, name descended from great Iulus” (trans. H. R. Fairclough)³⁶. Milton learnt Virgil’s method of narrating at the same time substituting his apotheosis and secular vision which is the ultimate ingenuity of Milton.

Scholars who have paid close attention to Milton’s Latin and Italian poetic models. They have shown how creatively he imitated them. He assimilated their language structure and imitated their vernacular. According to B. A. Wright (1969)³⁷, Milton’s employment of Latin idiom and syntax were “Devices for attaining in English some of the effect of the loaded line Latin verse, which is a legitimate aim in a poem that deliberately emulates Virgil.

1.3. Ovid, Milton’s Chief Idol:

John Milton admits in his Latin elegies that he frequently adopts verse forms, themes and poetic standards for his own goals from his classical predecessors since they are easy to imitate (Prose 1.889). Ovid was his idol. He quickly became familiar with Ovid’s habit and thought and became largely inspired by his poetry especially his *Metamorphoses*. It is why Milton used Ovidian themes as that of the exile and death. Milton However tends to reject his predecessors’ beliefs and values.

According to the testimony of John Milton’s daughter, Deborah, her father’s favourite work was Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as she used to read for him when he became blind. Some scholars have noticed Milton’s *Paradise Lost* echoes and alludes to Ovid’s *Metamorphose*. Ovid compiled numerous works allowing him to be a compendium for biblical and classical religion references. Milton, however, sought to be the voice and the poet of the previously-mentioned.

³⁶ Fairclough, H. R. *Virgil’s Aeneid book I-VI* (Boston: BE NJ. H. SANBORN C O, 1919).

³⁷ Wright, B. A. *Milton Poems no. 384* (London: Everman’s Library, 1969)

Ovid was a rhetoric pioneer for postmodern subjectivity, while Milton is now standing on the threshold of modern one. Ovid is highly criticised for his heretic writings like the use of sexual related contents, while Milton shows a great puritan rectitude. Ovid seems to have no seriousness or value, whereas Milton portrays a sense of severity and a great thoughtful mind. Ovid appears to encourage unlicensed violent sexuality, yet Milton encourages chastity and marriage. Ovid's universe is chaotic and unorganised. He incites the gods to have unethical relation with humans. However, Milton's universe is of order directed by an ethical God who is the Father and the Son who shall redemption to mankind.

Richard J. DuRocher in his *Milton and Ovid* says that “Milton and Ovid are inextricably bound up together”³⁸. Milton's *Paradise Lost* uses pairs of characters such as Adam and Eve, Christ and Satan. For critics, this might mean something. Thomas De Quincey describes Milton and Ovid as “a wedding of male and female counterparts not all have seen it as a happy or lasting union.”³⁹ Few Critics, such as Edward Kennard Rand have other interpretation for this relation among these pairs. They want to understand how Milton read Ovid. We know that both have written the past. These critics argue that Ovid was contemplated to Milton throughout the use of allegories that in the Middle Ages was a prominent element in the synthesising of the biblical and classical traditions. Ovid made a disgrace of it, yet long survived owing to the influence of schools and strongly with the rise of humanism wherein Ovid became primarily the central discussion for his *Metamorphoses* and especially for his *Golding* and *Sandy*. This was present in Milton's figure of Sin.

Davis Harding's (1946) assumes in his *Milton and the Renaissance Ovid*⁴⁰ that Ovid was allegorical, thus, inspiring Milton. Harding's assumptions were reinforced by John Mulryan's

³⁸ DuRocher, J. Richard *Milton and Ovid* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985)

³⁹ De Quincey, Thomas. *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey* (New York: A & C Black Soho Square London, 1897)

⁴⁰ David Philoon Harding, *Milton and The Renaissance Ovid*, (University of Illinois Press, 1946)

(1996) “Through a Glass Darkly” study⁴¹. He believes that Milton received his inspiration through the readings of Ovid through the allegorical tradition which were disseminated around the diaries, letters, encyclopaedias, commentaries, dictionaries, or Florilegia.

Edward Rand (1925) for example holds that the influence of Ovid was to mellow Milton's own natural and puritan asceticism in his *Ovid and His Influence*⁴²:

To write them he must have known his Ovid virtually by heart, not merely the Metamorphoses ... but all the poems of Ovid, Fasti and Ibis as well as the poor verses of lamentation poured forth on the shores of the Black Sea, and of course, as Milton is writing elegy, the love poems, Amores with Heroides and the Art of Love. (111)

“Ovid was professedly Milton's model”, Argues Stapleton⁴³. He also asks that we must appreciate how “Ovid's poetry has exerted such a profound and formative influence on Milton's works”. Harding's questions the fact that if Ovid's works were part of the English educational syllabus in St. Pauls School where Milton received his education, would make it inspiring for Milton to read and mimic his works. School texts were insufficient for young Milton to fulfil his devotion to study the whole Ovidian canon. Edward Rand explains:

Milton's mind was naturally stern, simple, intense, tenacious of purpose, contemptuous of show. Oh happy the day when he became apprentice to the gayest of the ancient poets ... On Milton's temperament Ovid had undoubtedly a limbering effect ... Who would not shudder to think what the world might have lost had not Ovid tempered his youth... (132)

1.4. Dante and his Acquaintance to Milton:

Mr. Masson in his works *Life of Milton* (1877) depicts the formidable efforts made by Milton to largely borrow from his predecessors. However, this does not create doubt in Milton's

⁴¹ John Mulryan, "Through a Glass Darkly": Milton's Reinvention of the Mythological Tradition (*Medieval & Renaissance Literary Studies*)(Duquesne y First Edition, 1996)

⁴² Edward Kennard Rand, *Ovid and His Influence* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company 1925)

⁴³ Stapleton, M. L. *Marlowe's Ovid: The "Elegies" in the Marlowe Canon* (Indiana University, 2014)

originality but to show how *Paradise Lost* is a carrier of many traces of influence of other poets in terms of language, metaphors and ideas.

The fact that Milton has great acquaintance with Dante is unquestionable. Oskar Kuhns (1898)⁴⁴ argues that Milton, in 1638, went to Italy and spent the months of August and September in Florence, the birth place of the Divine poet. He sees that these two great religious poets of Italy and England share resemblance of aspects of life, character and literary activities. In this vein, he announces that both of them were scholars, deeply dedicated in their daily learning process, both were religious, severe to the condemnation of sin and destitute to the corruption of the church and highly thought about the welfare of their countries. The latter made them suffer from exile and poverty, for Dante, and Blindness for Milton.

Milton was a poet who was aware of the cosmos. During his journey in Florence, he met the great astronomer, Galileo Galilei. He was old and blind and under house arrest, because of his discovery that the earth is orbiting around the sun, as formulated in his “Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems.” Milton got highly inspired by Galileo’s thoughts on the universe. In this visit, he learnt about the planets, the sun, the moon, and the spherical universe which all brought such a quality to his epic *Paradise Lost*. Milton, in his *Areopagitica*, recalls his visit to Galileo where he warned England from the upheaval of censorship in Europe.

There is such a strong resemblance of composition between Milton and Dante. The earliest works of each was lyrical and the melancholy of *Il penseroso* with the pastoral poem of *L’allegro* share similarities with Dante’s *Canzoniere* as well as *La Vita Nuova* with Milton’s *Comus*. Again, the *De monarchia* that holds vigorous ideas on the church and the state can draw an analogy with *The Reason of Church Government* and other Milton’s religious tractates.

⁴⁴ Oscar Kuhns “*Modern Language Notes*” (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins, 1898)

However, the similarities of the *Divine Comedy* or, *Inferno*, with *Paradise Lost* will be debated later.

The studies of Dante had severe attraction on Milton. His works were characterised by not intertextuality but an allusion with mere translation of certain passages and direct references that Milton found very interesting. An example of free translation is in *Paradiso xxix* “sì che le pecorelle, che non sanno, / tornan del pasco pasciute di vento, / e non le scusa non veder lo danno”. Compared to Milton’s *Lycidas* “The hungry Sheep look up, and are not fed, / But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw, / Rot inwardly and foul contagion spread.”

Another example of Milton’s allusion was in his 1641 Pamphlet *of Reformation of Church-Discipline in England* “Ah, Constantine! of how much ill was mother, / Not thy conversion, but that marriage dower / Which the first wealthy Father took from thee!” With Dante’s *Inferno* “Ahi, Constantin, di quanto mal fu matre, / non la tua conversion, ma quella dote / che da te prese il primo ricco patre”

Paradise Lost is the best example of expressing Dante’s inspiration on Milton. David Masson (1877) argues that Milton wanted to make an epitome form on one of the previous epic poems made by Homer, Virgil, and Tasso. This was proved by the passage in *The Reason of Church Government* where he expresses his uncertainty of committing such an act. Masson argues that this passage as like an archive for Milton’s “meditations and hesitations.”⁴⁵

It is not so evident that John Milton was inspired from Dante Alighieri, the most prominent Italian poet of the Late Middle Ages. The setting of *Paradise Lost* takes place in both Hell and Heaven. This clearly is a token which proves that John Milton had immense influence from Dante. For some readers, the latter would be in a way elusive. Hell is a common setting for the two remarkable works. It is commonly depicted as the place where the sinful belong, where

⁴⁵ Masson, David. *Milton's Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan press, 1995)

he is punished for his bad deeds, and where numerous evil creatures exist “Infernal world; and thou profoundest hell” (Milton 221). Dante first coins the term *Inferno* to refer to hell located at the bottom. Similarly, Milton refers to hell as the lost paradise or *Paradise Lost* which is also at the bottom. John Milton describes in *Paradise Lost* “Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace And rest can never dwell, hope never comes That comes to all; but torture without end,” and “The dark, unbottomed, infinite abyss”. Milton was overwhelmed by Dante’s Hell *Inferno* and mainly by its degradation of the sinful in the Nine Circles of hell; it is why he sought to have his own version of hell that shares some features with Dante’s. Therefore, he uses the same words as fire, brimstone, darkened, dungeon, burning, sulfur and flames to fully describe the horrible atmosphere, the setting, of what is found in his created hell, Milton’s hell. He demonstrates, “A dungeon horrible, on all sides round As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames No light, but rather darkness visible.”⁴⁶

Alighieri Dante’s first part of his *Divine Comedy* of the 14th century was his epic poem *Inferno*. This poem as previously stated had a striking impact on Milton especially in the regard of settings’ build up. Milton in resemblance to Dante endeavoured to assemble another setting that is so unlike hell. Heaven is hereto portrayed as a sacred, beautiful and a wonderful place. Dante’s *Paradiso* is his third part of his *Divine Comedy* depicts heaven. It is seen as another opposition of nine concentric spheres where each is closer to the presence of God. Dante’s universe is a composition of the concentric spheres which are surrounding the Earth, in addition to the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Fixed Stars, the Primum Mobile and the Empyrean. Milton as well constructed his Heaven as a limpid place. In *Paradise Lost*, he says “Heaven hides nothing from thy view Nor the deep tract of Hell”. John Milton’s Cosmo is undoubtedly inspired from Dante’s that has a quite similar structure afresh composed of the sun, The Moon, the earth, the planets, and the stars all in a spherical structure. This structure

⁴⁶ Milton, John. *Paradise Lost; A Poem in Twelve Books (II ed.)* (London: S. Simmons. 1667)

is hung from Heaven with a chain made of the precious metal, gold. In this universe likewise, Hell is at the end opposite to Heaven. Everything that is not within this sphere and Heaven is deemed as Chaos.

1.5. Ariosto and his Influential Romance:

Scholars of Milton believe that, in his epics, some undetected allusions exist to Ariosto's romance, especially in his *Orlando Furioso*. Along with these allusions, they say that *Paradise Lost* as well as *Paradise Regained* includes characters and events analogous to *Orlando Furioso*. Merritt Hughes and Alastair Fowler deem these allusions as a necessity for Milton as an English poet to recover from his recent popular predecessor during the Renaissance.

According to James H. Sims (1997) in his *Orlando Furioso in Milton: Heroic Flights and True Heroines*, Milton endeavoured to literally translate from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* "cosa non detta in prosa mai, né in rima" to *Paradise Lost* "Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme"

Sims (1997) further illustrates. As a comparative literature enthusiast, he compares the two "things unattempted" as historically recurrent. Ariosto's plot was concerned with the paradox of Orlando in his sanity restoration journey through a heavenly intervention. He also says that the very first four stanzas include a martial plot that inspires both future and current generations. Both poets share this feature of making the familiar new.

As for Milton's attempt, Sims explains how Milton was successful in making his "supernaturally illumined and uplifted mortal voice" plots. It is true that they were inspired from his earlier poets' narrations; nevertheless, Milton was creative enough to make a story out of men's loss, and the fall of both men and angels. He created a new universe and, by virtue, a journey of restoration of human values.

Perhaps Milton thought he could echo Ariosto in his epics. Milton's ideas were "unattempted in the bible? Or unattempted in English Literature?" questions David Daiches (1964).⁴⁷

Hughes (2011)⁴⁸ admires John Milton's original ingenuity saying that "Neither Homer's epics, nor The Aeneid, nor any other epic poem has ever exemplified the spiritual heroism that is Milton's theme".

Miltonic themes are thought to be treating matters of human moral virtue heroically under the development of a divine eye of Providence. The theme of spiritual heroism of Adam and Eve after the fall is similar to Ariosto's. Both share heroic moments such as the self-sacrificing for love that predicts Eve's readiness and willingness to sacrifice herself for Adam, as she took the blame to herself, and her will to repent. Similarly, we as readers see that Ariosto's Isabella gives up her life than to betray Zerbino or her oath to die a virgin (Canto 29). Hughes thinks that Ariosto, being present in Milton's epics would certainly make them more valued and profound. Miltonic themes represent a self-pleasuring pursuit of the male for female beauty portrayed to be likely a manipulative way by a woman for "selfish ends, degrades of human dignity". Themes of self-selfishness and pride are there in Orlando's pursuit of Angelica that leads to a "violent bestiality" till he eventually restores his sanity (Cantos 23-24, 38). Angelica's begins to admire herself more as a person when she falls in love with Medoro (Canto 19).

The same thing is seen In *Paradise Lost* when Michael shares his opinion on Adam's posterity, we see the harmful aftermaths on the whole humanity of male philandering and female coquetry. In addition, we see Satan failure to whisper the evils of temptations for Jesus to be sexually attracted is useless as Jesus reacts completely the opposite showing no seduction for female beauty nor manipulation by their charms. Another theme applied by both poets, goes in

⁴⁷ Daiches, David. *Milton: Poems ; John Milton Editor-Laurence D.* (Harmondsworth . Penguin, 1985).

⁴⁸ Hughes, Ann. "*Milton, Areopagitica, and the Parliamentary Cause*" (Oxford: 2011).

parallel with all religious standards, holds the idea of both sexes are equally intelligent and have an innate ability for self-governance, with that of moral judgment comes to them both. Yet, In Ariosto's, the story of Ginevra expresses a complete opposite view when the alleged adulteress is found guilty leaving the adulterer to go unpunished (Cantos 4-6). The other story of the old man who hears story of the host Giocondo and Astolfo absolutely defends men incontinence. (Cantos 27-28).

Identically, in Milton's, we see Adam holds a lesser responsibility for the fall of mankind to Earth with greater blame on Eve in her temptation from Satan to encourage Adam to commit a sin (*Paradise Lost* 9-10). Lastly, a common theme holding that Beauty might disarm evil, though evil would still continue to accomplish its wicked effects. We see Ariosto showing how the beauty of Angelica makes Eudamans to doubt temporarily her exposure to the Orc (Canto 8) The beauty of Eve, too, distracts temporarily Satan from his evil intentions; nonetheless, Satan still pursues his duty to make her eat the forbidden fruit (*Paradise Lost* 9). Both Milton's and Ariosto's female characters are rescued by providence. Angelica meets and marries Medoro and goes back to the Indian throne (Canto 19) and Eve, with Adam of course, to have redemption making possible the restoration of Eden (*Paradise Lost* 12, *Paradise Regained* 4).

Conclusion:

Milton is a poet with an extravagant influence taken from his precursors. This influence dates back to the time of Ancient oral Greek Literature that began with Homer, and then Virgil and Ovid the chief representatives of the Roman one followed by the two Italian leading figures, Dante and Ariosto. Altogether, they have all influenced Milton in such a way, yet Milton was immensely creative to go beyond the borders of English literature through his creative style and rhetoric. Milton holds great indebtedness to his predecessors represented in his sense of originality *Bona fide*.

CHAPTER III

John Milton's Application of Christian and Midrashic Beliefs

Introduction

1. John Milton's application of Christian and Midrashic Beliefs

1.1. Midrashim Milton

1.2. Milton and Christianity

Conclusion

Introduction:

This chapter is going to be discussing mainly the religious influences of John Milton. It explores the relationship between John Milton and his most inspiring religions, Christianity and Judaism along with Bible and Jewish Midrash which were reflected in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*.

1. John Milton's Application of Christian and Midrashic Beliefs

John Milton derived some aspects from both Hebraic and Christian traditions.

1.1. Midrashim Milton:

For many years, the Jewish Golda Werman (1995) in her book *Milton and Midrash* held the idea of the Hebraic *Aggadot*, a homiletic unauthorized Midrash, has strongly influenced Milton. For her, *Paradise Lost* is midrashic in content and method as well. She argues that *Paradise Lost* "is largely a midrashic commentary on a few brief biblical passages". Milton "turned and turned the biblical text to derive every possible meaning from it," which is the task of any midrashist. Milton diligently sought after this knowledge. (167)

Werman, in her survey of Christian early Church father responses to the Midrash during Milton's circa, unveiled that the Midrash was often relied upon in the early days of Christianity. However, the growth of anti-Semitism weakened the Midrash during the Middle Ages. Anti-Semites burnt a great number of Jewish books in 1242, Paris. Ironically, the Hebraica witnessed tremendous public interest after the incident. Therefore, Jewish biblical exegesis could find a home among biblical scholars, especially among those non-exegetical tradition Protestants to lay claim to such as Milton. During the mid-seventeenth century, there was an appearance of many midrashic materials in Latin translation as it is widely known that Milton was capable of reading and understanding Latin language. Werman made it clear that Milton approached not the rabbinic sources in their original language although Milton spoke Hebrew.

Some scholars deem Milton as a devout Christian who had to live in an anti-Semitic England of the seventeenth century, a period of pietism. It was a time of clash between Protestantism and Catholicism when the Jews were seen as heretics blamed for the murder of Christ. Milton's *Paradise Lost* reflected such religious upheavals with the application of Hebraic mythological characters, Greek and Roman. A poet of this historical background and religion used Judaic backgrounds in his most famous poem with astounding success as he creates a timeless work, famous for its mesmeric beauty and authorship.

Milton's inspiration account comes from the Jewish Torah. Since all his demonic characters such as *Belial*, *Moloch*, *Abdiel* and *Uriel* along with the epic geography are Jewish. We see that Satan is depicted as an adversary to God. The latter existed in the Torah. In *Paradise Lost*, a snake "Th' infernal Serpent;" seduces Eve to eat from the "forbidden tree" similarly in Jewish beliefs; Satan or *Ha Satan* is a talking serpent in the rabbinical thoughts. Another example that can be made is that *Gan Eden* in Hebrew stands for the Garden of Eden which first appears in the book of Genesis when God creates humanity and places them in the Garden of Eden. Milton also appears to have a wide knowledge of the Old Testament, the section of the Bible which contains the five books of Torah writings and prophets (Werman 1995). Milton demonstrates:

*First Moloch, horrid King besmeared with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parents tears... him the Ammonite,
Worshipped in Rabba and her watery plain,
In Argob and in Basan, to the stream
Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
Audacious neighborhood, the wisest heart
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
His temple right against the temple of God,
On that opprobrious Hill, and made his Grove
The pleasant Valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
And black Gehenna called, the Type of Hell... (Paradise
Lost. Line 390)*

A broad knowledge of Judaic names and tradition is apparent in the block quotation above. This is an indication that John Milton was well-aware of their names and onomastics.

Milton's Midrashes show similarities with those of the rabbis. *Paradise Lost* has many stories and conversations between Messiah and Hashem and Michael and Adam. This kind of elaborations has the same structure as the Midrashes of Rashi. Golda Werman (1995) contends that *Paradise Lost* can be considered as a modern Midrash".

According to her, the use of Judaism in *Paradise Lost* might seem inappropriate for such poet during that time. Yet with a closer look, it is the key criterion that makes his epic poem epic and realistic. Eventually, the fall and Redemption in Christianity is actually of Jewish roots with its midrashic authorities. *Paradise Lost* is a combination of both Christian and Jewish. Thus, colour the pages of *Paradise Lost* like no other author has done before nor will ever do (Werman 1995).

1.2. Milton and Christianity:

Paradise Lost and other major poems by Milton like *Samson Agonistes*, *Paradise Regained*, and *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* dramatize stories from the Bible. But references to the Bible are much more pervasive in Milton's work than just in those works whose obvious storyline comes from the Bible. Phrases and images from the Bible are everywhere in both his poetry and his prose.

William Blake (1790), in his *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, put forward that, "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it." Blake is not assuming that Milton was not aware of the full facts as being the agent of Satan, nor for those purely literary purposes making Satan as the hero of his epic. Blake argues that Satan is given a better literary treatment than God. It is not for absolute to say about any intentions of a person to

be truly loyal, but the agony in the depiction of God in *Paradise Lost* suggests that Milton was intending to be faithful to God's party. Inspired by the Christians belief that Jesus is the Son of God, that he is one with God, and that he was sent here for our salvation in John 10:30 (NIV translation) is apparent in *Paradise Lost* when the Father addresses the Son. He does so with excessive theological precision:

*O Son, in whom my soul hath chief delight,
Son of my bosom, Son who art alone
My Word, my wisdom, and effectual might,
All hast thou spoken as my thoughts are, all
As my eternal purpose has decreed... (Line 170)*

Milton's verses show that he refers to Jesus Christ as the son of God which is purely Christian. In addition, these verses show the association of purity, wisdom and importantly might to Jesus Christ as God selects him to be his purpose. This theological precision distinguishes Milton from other poets of his generation making him a poet of poetical ingenuity.

Paradise Lost symbolises God as the Light. It is an inspired from the bible. In John 1:5: "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." The Gospel, however, also declares that, "if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." (John 11:10). Milton shows the need of mankind for light, the one God offers since He's our light or as Milton puts it "that celestial light" (Line 245).

John Shawcross (1993)⁴⁹ found that Milton had an inspiration from true events that were taking place during his era. He was a man of religion and took public stances on many occasions. Importantly, the readings of *Paradise Lost* are his positions on religion. At that time, the Anglican Church or Church of England got divided into the high Anglican, moderate Anglican, and Puritan or Presbyterian sectors. Milton was a Presbyterian. This autonomous branch called for the abolishment of bishops as a part of an office in the Catholic and Anglican churches. Eventually,

⁴⁹ Shawcross, John. *John Milton: The Self and the World* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993).

Milton ended up hailing for the omission of all priests referring to them as hirelings as well as the complete abolishment of the Church. Milton narrates:

*Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the most High,
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battel proud
With vain attempt. (Line 40)*

Clearly, Milton urges for rebellion and resistance against authority and dictatorship as a call for freedom and democracy. For him, such actions are glorified.

He was still a religious man but despised corruption he witnessed in Catholic Churches as he continued to attack it in his poetry and prose. In *Lycidas*, he describes Catholics as hungry wolves leaping into a sheep's pen which is very similar to the image of his depiction of Satan leaping over the wall of Paradise in *Paradise Lost*⁵⁰. Milton's individual perspective of Christianity makes *Paradise Lost* simultaneously original, personally and universally. (Shawcross 1993)

Alan Hager (2004)⁵¹ states that throughout the years Milton spent thinking, he classified all Christian churches as Anglican, Catholic or Presbyterian all as a barrier to true faith. He sought to encourage individualism as powerful instrument to interpreting the Word of God than the examples set by a church. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton expresses the idea of the fall of Adam and Eve Eden is a blissful fortunate since it allows individuals to redeem themselves by true repentance and faith.

Paradise Lost portrays a great number of occupations related to Protestant Christianity; the union of the Old and New Testaments with the lowness of men and the importance of Jesus

⁵⁰ Milton, John. *Paradise Lost* (New York: Broadview Press, 2012)

⁵¹ Hager, Alan. *The Age of Milton: An encyclopedia of Major 17th-century British and American Authors*. (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004).

Christ's admiration for man's salvation. Nevertheless, the epic poem does not make visible a unified and cohesive theory of Christian theology, nor does it want to identify the disbelievers, redefine Christianity, or even replace the Bible. Instead, Milton's *Paradise Lost* stands as an unprecedented presentation of the biblical stories which are meant to stimulate Christian readers and aid them to be better Christians. (Parry 2007)⁵²

We can deduce that Milton held a sincere bona fide to the Christian references yet imprinted with is unique originality.

Conclusion:

John Milton and his readings for both Hebraic and Christian transcripts enabled him to have new ideas and thoughts to which he can apply in his *Paradise Lost*. The latter was seen along the names of characters, their positions, and along the plot of the poem.

⁵² Parry, David. "*Milton and the Bible*." *Darkness Visible*. (Adrian Plass, 2007)

General Conclusion:

John Milton is a unique poet who endeavoured to work his anxiety in order to be at the forefront. His Epic dramatic *Paradise Lost* made a massive drastic shift in the history of English Literature and Western Literature Alike. His ingenuity and bona fide were the two main qualities which differentiate Milton from any other poet.

John Milton spent his whole life reading and writing poetry in order to be a great poet. It is why he was inspired by a great number of poets beginning from Homer in the eighth century to Virgil, Ovid, Dante and Ariosto in the sixteenth century. So the existence of centuries of literariness is present among his works. He had also been a poet of awareness for religion such as Christianity and Judaism. These two ancient religions had greatly inspired John Milton especially in his epic *Paradise Lost*.

This dissertation revealed the different themes in the works of John Milton's precursors which he had borrowed and presented afresh in a creative way. It also revealed the tremendous presence of the Hebraic Midrash in *Paradise Lost* which was intentionally applied by Milton to create a new atmosphere for his epic poem. Furthermore, he also applied a combination of Christian beliefs and Presbyterian ones to give literature a new form of work.

As it is demonstrated in the aforementioned, this study has prevailed upon its aim besides answering the main questions by providing that John Milton was a poet who have been inspired by his predecessors Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Dante, Ariosto and by Judaic and Christian traditions. In addition, this study proved that *Paradise Lost* is an embodiment of previous work.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Homer

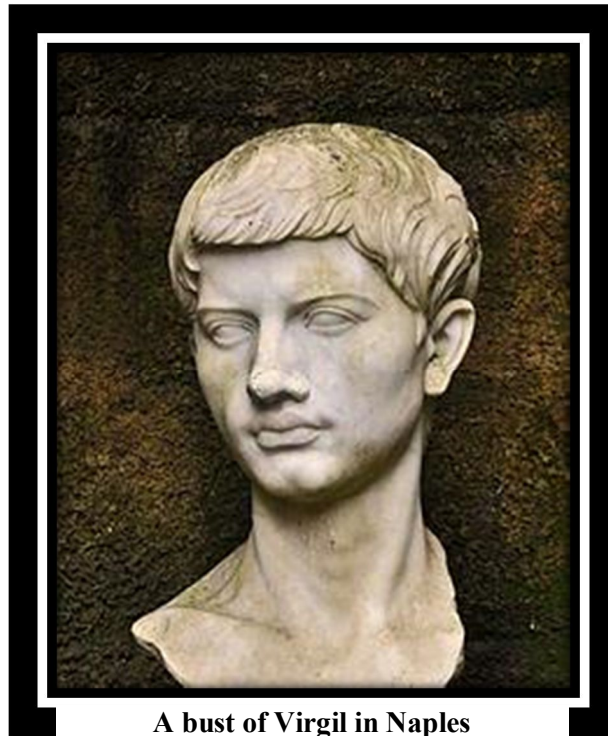


Homer by Caravaggio (Italian, 1571-1610).

Homer, or *Hómēros* (Ὅμηρος) in Ancient Greek, was born around the eighth century B.C. At that time, he was well-known as "the Poet" (Ἦ ποιητής). He was a Greek epic poet and an oral storyteller. The first two, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are his first classical works of Western literature.

Appendix B

Virgil



A bust of Virgil in Naples

Virgil, Vergil, or *Publius Vergilius Maro* born in Roman Republic in October 15th, 70 BCE, died in September 21st, 9 BCE aged 50. He was a Roman epic poet during the Augustan Poetry era. His early works were the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* along with the *Appendix Vergiliana*, a collected series of short poems.

Appendix C

Ovid



Ovid by Luca Signorelli

Ovid, or *Publius Ovidius Naso* born in March 20th, 43 BCE, Sulmo, Roman Empire, died in 17th CE, Tomis, Moesia. He was a Roman poet known for his *Metamorphoses* and *Ars amatoria*. His verses, imaginations, classical myths and accomplishments were very influential.

Appendix D

Ariosto



Ariosto by Vincenzo Catena

Ariosto or *Ludovico Ariosto* was born in September 8th, 1474 in Italy, died in July 6th, 1533. He was an Italian poet who had his unique attitudes during the Italian Renaissance. His works were *I student*, *I suppositi*, *Il negromante*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Satire*, *La lena*, *Cassaria* and *Cinque Canti*. Ariosto worked on *Orlando furioso* as he carried on revising and refining it for the rest of his life since 1505.

Appendix F

Dante

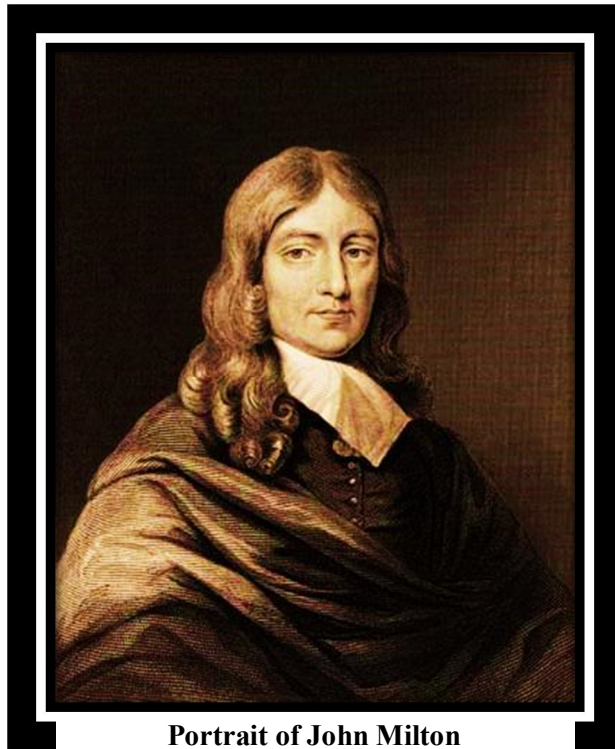


**Dante Alighieri by Nikolay
Konstantinovich Kalmakov**

Dante or Dante Alighieri was born in circa May 21 to June 20, 1265 in Italy, died September 1321. He was a major Italian poet during the *Dolce Stil Novo* movement, a statesman, a language theorist, a moral philosopher, and a political thinker. He is best known for his long narrative epic poems known as the Divine comedy or *La commedia* or *La Divina commedia* which consists of three parts, the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*.

Appendix E

John Milton



Portrait of John Milton

John Milton was born in London, England on Tuesday 9th of December, 1608 and died at the age of 66 in November 8th, 1674. He is an English poet, a pamphleteer, a prose polemicist and one of the patriarchs of the English literature. His famous works are *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, *of Reformation*, *Lycidas* and *Areopagitica*. He could speak English, Latin, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish, Aramaic, and Syriac

He began to write poetry by the age of eighteen after he got suspended from Cambridge College 1626. Two years later and on Christmas morning, he wrote “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”. In 1632, he published his poem “On Shakespeare” immediately after he graduated with M.A Degree. *Lycidas* poem was written to eulogize Edward King, his friend who drowned. During 1639, he wrote *Epitaphium Damonis* to, again, eulogize Charles Diodati. He got married three times and suffered from divorce. He had 3 children, Anne, Mary, John and Deborah Milton.

John Milton spent his childhood studying. He says, “My father destined me in early childhood for the study of literature, for which I had so keen an appetite that from my twelfth year scarcely ever did I leave my studies for my bed before the hour of midnight,”. He was

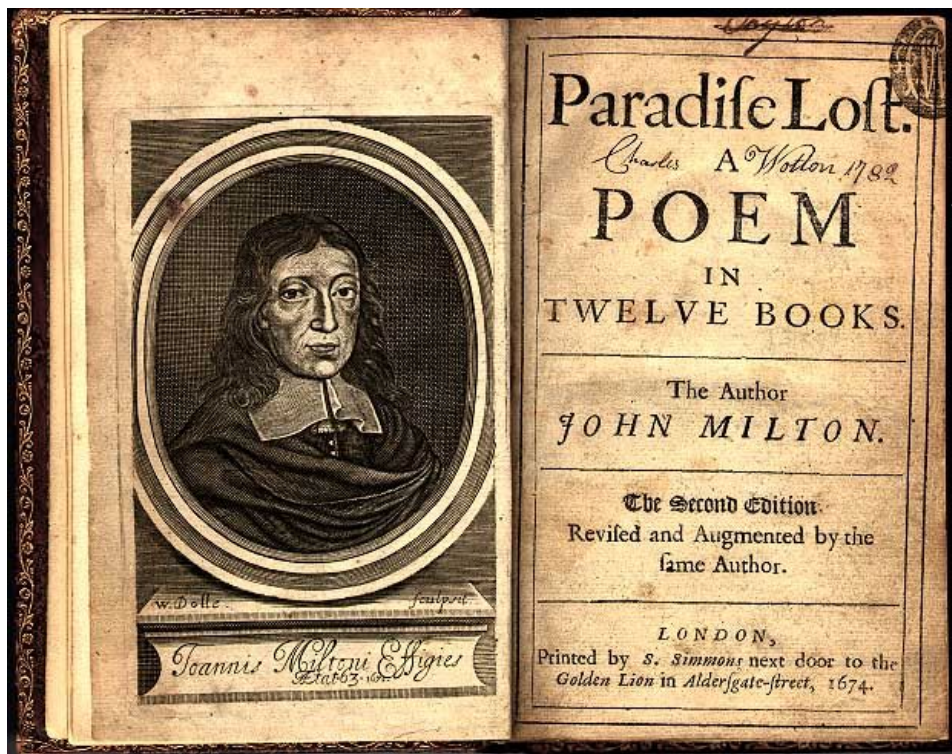
successful in his academic career and received a master's degree at Cambridge in 1632. Then, he carried on reading history and classical literature.

Milton wanted to be a poet, but England of his day was in the throes of revolution. Parliament, led primarily by Oliver Cromwell, appointed a court that had King Charles I executed in 1649. Using persuasive prose, Milton defended this action and became a spokesman for the Cromwell government. In fact, before attaining fame as a poet, John Milton was already well-known for his tracts on politics and morals.

After the monarchy was restored with the coronation of Charles II in 1660, Milton's earlier alignment with Cromwell put his life in danger. Milton went into hiding, and only with the help of powerful friends did he escape death. Through it all, he retained a strong spiritual inclination.

Appendix G

Paradise Lost



Paradise Lost was originally published in 1667, England. It was first published in ten books of ten thousand lines of verse followed by the second version in 1674 of twelve books, the one being used today. It is Milton's masterpiece which is written in Blank verse.

Paradise Lost has similar story to the Biblical one, that of the Fall of Man. It also narrates the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Lucifer, Satan, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.