

From the Historical Dackground to Analyze John Milton and Paradise Lost

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Abstract : As a literary giant, **John Milton** is be known to all for his epic paradise lost. This essay is aimed to illustrate the backdrop of his sufferings and inner feelings about writing this great poem. In that case, readers can get further understanding about this epic and its writer.

Keywords:John Milton; Paradise Lost; L'allegro,Il Penseroso,Comus,and Lycidas ; Second Civil War; Old Testament; New Testament

1. A brief introduction of Milton's life and the epic Paradise Lost

John Milton (1608–1674) was undoubtedly the pearl at the age of Renaissance. Especially at the end of this time.

In 1608, December 9th, John Milton was born into a middle-class family. His father was a prosperous merchant and this high salary job contributed to his family wealth. Thanks to a wealthy family situation, it made it possible for young Milton to have access to things that he was interested in. Another thing from his father also exerted a deep influence on his whole life. It was that his father was a puritan. Not like other puritans, Milton's father was amiable and willing to instruct Milton classic music. The significant point was that Milton's father also had a passion for reading. This merit was inherited by little Milton, and it helped a lot in Milton's life. At Milton's age of ten, he could write some poems, which were excellent enough for people to read. In spite of his talent, Milton tended to stay up to midnight studying brand new knowledge, including logical, ideology and so on. This may have resulted in Milton's poor health condition for many years. At the age of 12, Milton was sent to prestigious St. Paul's Cathedral School. Then, he successfully entered college at Christ's College at Cambridge University at the age of 15. After graduating from Cambridge University, Milton used to consider being a pastor, taking over his family's estate near Windsor as his father wished. However, with the increasing serious conflicts between Christianity and Puritan, he ran counter to his family's command and chose to pursue a harmonious life of study. He spent 6 years (from 1632 to 1638) reading and understanding the classics in Greek and Latin. Meanwhile, he also cultivated new theories about music and mathematics. At this time, he wrote a large sum of books, such as **L'allegro, il penseroso, comus, and lycidas**, which yearned for happiness in future life and demonstrated meditation of past and now. In 1638 he was on his way to Italy, studying in Florence, Siena, and Rome. Once hearing the outbreaking of civil war, he returned back to England, devoting himself to the revolution. Quoted Milton's own words, "My motherland is holding in anguish, and it seems too crooked for me to travel for entertainment." **Second Civil War** ended after Charles's execution. Then, the new born political power came to the stage. Realizing the power of Milton's pamphlets, the new parliament appointed Milton as Latin Secretary.

2. The unique inner feeling beneath the epic

As for Milton, he wrote more political articles instead of poems to attack Royalists. After serving for civil position for some years, he retired from his home in Westminster because of his decreasing eyesight. By 1652, he was totally blind. There were not many years for Royalists to take back political power. Milton's deep fears were becoming true with the Restoration, which bought Charles the second back to the throne. Milton had to escape from the catching by royal government. However, he had already started his own English epic, **Paradise Lost**, which astonished the whole literature world. On November 8, 1674, John Milton passed away at his home. According to what all mentioned above, Milton led a studious and splendid life from his childhood to his death.

He was a versatile man who combined the spirits of scholar, poet and revolutionist. His works contributed to English literature, political science, and theological theology^[1]. The great theology poem *Paradise Lost*, which was created by Milton after he suffered both eyesight losing. This poem was dictated by Milton, and it was actually noted by his daughters and son-in-law. When mentioned Milton and his literature, one thing that could not be overlooked are the backdrop of his writing. Restoring the monarchy of the House of Stuart brought England into arbitrary rule and smashed Milton's political ideas into crumbs. In spite of being framed and attacked by his political opponents, the awkward situation of the economy and even the dark life he can only experience after being blind, he created one of the greatest epics in human history. No one could really imagine his inner feelings about writing this poem. Readers cannot even illustrate whether it was his anguish or the love for the motherland pushing him to write his works to ignite a little spark in

the midnight of democracy. In his whole life, not only the stern from a puritan but also the elegant from humanism could be witnessed by later generations. “John Milton is the older timer for the Enlightenment thinkers” mentioned by Friedrich Engels.

As an identity of scholar, Milton absorbed many foreign and classic languages. For example, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, Aramaic, Spanish, Anglo-Saxon and Dutch^[2]. These skills used in his literature present a fusion of multilanguage. Through all his works, the sentence structure derived from Latin, the figure of speech guided by Classicism from Greek and Roman made his poem full of mysterious meanings^[3]. Though it was unfriendly to readers. He had built a balance between languages, philosophy and politics and fused all these with his uncanny sense of tone and diction. Milton was a believer in his whole life. His theological concepts could also be found in his literature. He was firmly convinced that the warship of god^[4] was to save his believers instead of saving some selected lambs. This concept stimulated people in his era to become better puritans.

For his literature work **Paradise Lost**; these merits from Milton could be viewed. As for one of his most penetrating poems, *Paradise Lost* portrays a story about the ancestor of all humankind, Adam and Eve who eats the fruit of the forbidden trees and eventually being banished from Golden of Eden after being lured by Satan^[5]. This story seemed ordinary through being produced by thousands of followers of Christianity before Milton. In contrast, from the view of Milton, the story was reformed. The theology literature is surging forward with great momentum. Meanwhile, the poem achieves the unity of profound methods and pure poetry^[6]. The classic masterpiece sparking in the European literary world enhances the position of English literature in world literature.

This method for creating the long great epic was aroused by the reading experience for Milton to read Homer’s *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and Virgil’s *Aeneid* at his early age of sixteen. The fantastic images in these epics brought Milton intelligent ideals and brought artistic brilliance to English. Before he eventually decided on Adam’s theme and Eve’s excels from Garden, Milton thought about the story of King Arthur and the Noble Nights of the round table. From both of these topics, it is distinct that Milton wanted to write his poem on a British topic. Quoting these topics, he could inspire nationalist pride for a puritan and motivate patriotism for a British man.

As for Milton’s political ideals, they are expressed in his political pamphlets he wrote during his life. Being betrayed by an institution leads to his distrust on mono-power. He distrusted anyone who claims the dictatorship of power. He championed the power corrupts human’s minds no matter how great the person is. In fact, he also believes that in his day the hierarchy was eroded by the rule of Charles^[7] I , so, he stood out to directly support a riot. Milton argued that Charles I ,was not fit his subjects, as a supervisor. In fact, Milton believed the pure justice from a group of wisdom leaders in every aspect of society. However, it will never happen due to the shortage of humans. Consequently, fitting citizen’s needs, to set up a society, which is absolutely arranged by individuals is Milton’s political idea.

To the component part of the epic, there are 12 Books, including the epic. The **Old Testament** for 930 places and the **New Testament** for 490 places^[8] was quoted for the epic. However, the epic is not the simple inheritance of the **Bible**. Instead of routine succeeding, it transcends the constructure of **the Bible**, and it surpasses its inner meaning. By the original religion thinking from Bible, the “man’s falling “is caused by Satan after he lures Eve to eat the fruit. As a result, Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden. In contrast, in **Paradise Lost**, the reason for Adam and Eve’s falling is that they choose another way, but not, follow the god naturally. The image of Satan is changed from the absolutely evil symbol to the reluctant renegade with heroism. The image of God is transformed into a ruthless ruler. The revolution from the traditional Bible has come into being. This revolution illustrates the man’s falling is caused by man’s free will. This most significant core of the poem is throughout whole Books, which explore Milton’s religious and political methods.

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