

John Milton

We have many information about Milton's life. In fact he wrote about himself.

He was born in London in 1608. He studied a lot and travelled around Europe, but he had to go back to England because of the fight between the Puritans and Charles I.

Milton's second period began in 1642-43.

He married a Royalist woman, but they didn't get on together. So he wrote a pamphlet about divorce.

During the Civil War he sided with

Parliament. In 1643 he was appointed Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth. He

justified the execution of the King in a pamphlet, "The Defence of the English People".

Even if he sided with Parliament Charles II didn't take revenge on Milton. He died in 1674.

Library career

Milbon's library career is divided into three periods: during the first he wrote poetry, in the second political pamphlets and prose treatises and in the last he produced his major works: "Paradise Lost", "Paradise Regained" (published with "Samson Agonistes"). He also wrote twenty-three sonnets using the model given by the Italian poets like Dante, Petrarch and Basso.

Paradise Lost

It's an epic poem and follows the conventions of the epic given by classical: it begins with an invocation to the muse for inspiration, it begins in "medias res", it has a wide setting (cosmic), there are long lists of fallen angels which remind the ones of warriors in Homer, there are a lot of "epic" speeches, the style is elevated and there are many similes.

The setting of the first and second books is Hell seen in opposition of Heaven: darkness against light, gloominess against happiness.

Satan could be seen as the hero of the story because he has many traits typical of an epic hero: he is strong, he doesn't lose his hopes even if he has been defeated, etc. But he can't be the hero because of his degeneration throughout the story and of the purpose given by Milton to his work: "to justify the ways of God to men". Finally a hero must represent human virtues, not vices.

Milton's style is magnificent and elevated (grand). He uses Latin words to create a new English, a Latinized language. He uses the blank verse to give elegance and musicality to the poem. The blank verse is an iambic pentameter (five iambic

feet; iambic means that the foot is made up of two syllables whose the second is stressed) that doesn't rhyme. It was used by Chaucer and Shakespeare.

The Grand Style of "Paradise Lost" has been criticized for his magnificence and remote language. But we must consider that it is an epic poem and must follow the complex features of this genre. It can't use a colloquial language with simple expressions.