

THE EPIC STRUCTURE AND STYLE OF JOHN MILTON'S PARADISE LOST: A CRITICAL STUDY WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO BOOKS I AND II

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Abstract: Epic is a long narrative poetry, told in a ceremonial and elevated style, celebrating actions of superhuman prowess of a heroic or quasi-divine figure dedicated to the fortune of a city or civilization. It is the highest form of literary practice that human poetic genius can think of and attempt. Epic is the most solemn exercise of man's literary craftsmanship. John Milton's Paradise Lost is a quintessence of 'literary' epic in the Classical mould. It possesses all the attributes of literary epic and is a 'sublime' epic by virtue of its qualities and originality. It is diametrically different from other world epics in terms of its subject, manner of treatment, and execution of the epic design. The timelessness of Paradise Lost lies in the beauty and charm of its language and grand style. John Milton's Paradise Lost is highly artistic, original and engaging in terms of epic artistry and technical devices. Regarding its Structure, Style, and Form, it may be described as a highly accomplished artistic achievement of Milton's literary genius. The readers of Paradise Lost at times feel sandwiched between the hope of illumination and the labour of reading without intellectual relaxation. Paradise Lost is an epic poem per se whose style, structure, language and rhetorical devices constitute the centrality of Milton's unparalleled epic workmanship. Paradise Lost is an instance of a life-long devotion to Classical learning and Humanist scholarship. This research paper shall anatomize succinctly the epic style and structure of the epic poem Paradise Lost with reference to Books I and II.

Keywords: epic, literary, sublime, style, structure.

The epic is a kind of long narrative poetry in verse, elaborate and comprehensive in dimension, heroic in action and treatment, idealistic in conception and nature, sublime in thematic concerns, elevated and grand in expression, vast in scale, solid in weight and mass, majestic in the continuity of narrative technique, national or cosmic in significance and interest, lofty in ideas, originally oral in tradition, but written in modern culture, illimitable in operation, timeless in intrinsic worth. Epic is a very broader and difficult term to be defined and not surprisingly, it includes into its scope other forms of literature like myths, legends, religious tale, chronicle, history, folktale, romance, drama. Epic itself contains a variety of literature.

Epic is the highest of all poetic or literary genres, and is the most ambitious of poetic endeavours. The suitable instances of classical epic are Homer's unsurpassable the Iliad and the Odyssey. The ancient Latin epic poet Virgil's Aeneid is also a masterpiece in literary epic tradition. These three epics are considered as the foundation stones of epical composition and from them certain essential features and technical formulas have been derived and established as the indispensable attributes of epic poem. These epic characteristics have shaped the structure of epic poems of later epic poets including John Milton. Though the literary features and conventions of classical epic have framed Milton's epic artistry, yet his Paradise Lost is unique and goes to a considerable extent by its own rules and conventions. John Milton was a devout Christian poet and he confronted great troubles while following classical epic features and conventions. He diverged from certain epic conventions to suit his immaculate Puritan self and his biblical subject, the Fall of Man.

One of the essential characteristics of epic poetry is the national or cosmic significance of the hero. The hero should be a person of great national or cosmic significance. He should belong to the upper strata of the society and be above the common people by birth, lineage, position, and actions; he may also come of the gods and is unrivalled in physical strength and valour. The Greek warrior Achilles, in Homer's Iliad, is the son of the sea-nymph Thetis. While in Virgil's Aeneid, Aeneas is the son of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. In Paradise Lost, Adam, the hero of the poem, is the father of the entire human race. Paradise Lost is inarguably a different type of religious epic and is not analogous to Homeric epics in some important respects. Though Adam does not perform heroic actions and

exploits like Achilles or Ulysses, yet he is the Hero of the epic. The entire epic pivots around the central action 'Of Man's First Disobedience' in which Adam's role is supreme and he alone becomes the focus of readers' attention. His transgression constitutes the whole action of the epic:

“Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view
Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy State,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From thir Creator, and transgress his Will
For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?” (PL. 1. 27-33)

Adam is not a warrior here upholding any national or tribal cause but is the father of the whole human race faced with the spiritual conflict of good and evil. He is a noble, pious, and God-fearing character around whom other characters move including Satan, who is at times erroneously thought as the real hero of the poem. But Milton himself calls Adam as the noblest man fit to be his hero:

“So passd they naked on, nor shund the sight
Of God or Angel, for they thought no ill:
So hand in hand they passd, the lovliest pair
That ever since in loves imbraces met,
Adam the goodliest man of men since borne
His Sons, the fairest of her Daughters Eve.” (PL. 4. 319-324)

Adam imparts the virtue of natural magnificence and grandeur and emerges victorious against evil in the epic when Christ, the Messiah, shoulders the consequences of his act of disobedience and restores lost Paradise for him and his partner Eve. The fears, praises, sympathy, and interest of the readers centre round his personality. Paradise Lost is not a heroic epic like Homer's Iliad, but it is a sublime and majestic epic involving the spiritual struggle between good and evil with the gradual victory of the good over the continual inward and outward deterioration of the evil.

The second attribute of epic poetry is the comprehensive and vast nature of the setting of the poem. The setting of epic is ample in scale covering sometimes the entire world or may be even larger than that. It includes varied episodes of events and large number of characters. The scope of John Milton's Paradise Lost is the whole universe, for the action of the poem takes place in Heaven, in Hell, on Earth, in Chaos, and even in the cosmic Space. All the episodes that have been imaginatively conceived in the poem are projected around Heaven, Hell, Earth, Chaos, the Space and they involve a large number of characters having variety, dignity, and novelty, be human or divine. The poem incorporates the Creation of Adam and Eve, their settlement in the Garden of Eden, the impious War in Heaven between Satan and the Angels of God, the transgression of Adam and Eve in having the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, the journey of Satan through the Chaos to discover the newly created Earth, and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. As the epic opens, we notice Satan and his crew lying vanquished in the fiery gulf of Hell:

“Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquisht, rowling in the fiery Gulfe
Confounded though immortal: But his doom
Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him;” (PL. 1. 50-56)

Satan, out of pride and a sense of “injured merit”, began a diabolic war in Heaven against the throne and Monarchy of God, but God flung him headlong into the bottomless pit of Hell. After a scholarly debate in the theatrical Congress in Hell, Satan himself took the responsibility to explore the new world and corrupt the new creation there. After an arduous journey through the vast, limitless Chaos, Satan successfully reached a place wherefrom he came to see a pendant world hanging by a golden chain far off the empyreal Heaven. It is obvious that Paradise Lost encompasses the entire universe. The setting of this epic is much vaster than any known classical epics and here lies the greatness of John Milton's conception.

The third characteristic of epic poem is that the actions or incidents of epic poem should involve extraordinary heroic exploits in battle-fields such as Achilles' heroic feats in the Trojan War in Homer's Iliad, or the superhuman deeds of Arjun in Kurukeshtra in Mahabharata, or the long hazardous and arduous voyage of Odysseus on the way back to his homeland, Ithaca, in Homer's Odyssey, or Beowulf's valorous confrontations with the man-eating monster Grendel, his mother, and finally the fire-breathing dragon in the Old English heroic epic Beowulf. It is worth mentioning that this particular virtue of epic poem is more obviously present in the ancient 'oral' epics than in the later 'literary' epics. This epic quality features in Milton's Paradise Lost also, for it includes the diabolic War in Heaven, the rebellion of Satan and his fellow rebel Angels against the supreme authority of God, the hazardous journey of Satan to explore the newly created world, and his audacious machinations to thwart God's plan by corrupting mankind. Satan hopefully declares his programme before the fallen Angels that according to an ancient heavenly tradition God would create a new race of beings towards whom he would show a special favour and they would be privileged to enjoy equality with the Angels of Heaven. Satan, out of desperate malice, intends to frustrate God's plan by discovering the Earth and corrupting the new race of beings i.e. Adam and Eve:

“Henceforth his might we know, and know our own
So as not either to provoke, or dread
New warr, provok't; our better part remains
To work in close design, by fraud or guile
What force effected not: that he no less
At length from us may find, who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.
Space may produce new Worlds; whereof so rife
There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long
Intended to create, and therein plant
A generation, whom his choice regard
Should favour equal to the Sons of Heaven:
Thither, if but to prey, shall be perhaps
..... Peace is despair'd,
For who can think Submission? Warr then, Warr
Open or understood must be resolv'd.” (PL. 1. 643-662)

The fourth characteristic of epic poem is the employment of supernatural machinery i.e. the participation of supernatural characters in the action of the epic. In the actions and incidents of the epic poem, the gods or the supernatural beings take an active part or play a significant role in resolving the complications of the plot, thus providing an immense scope to the poet for the free exercise of his poetic imagination. For instance, the Greek Olympian gods played a remarkable part in the main action of the Homeric epics. John Milton's Paradise Lost is indefeasibly distinct from the classical epics in that it has only two human characters—Adam and Eve—around whom all the other characters revolve. Excepting these two human characters, all other agents in the poem are supernatural like God, Christ, Good Angels, Satan, and the rebel Angels. In this respect, Paradise Lost transcends all other epics and here God, the creator of Adam and Eve, the Good and Bad Angels, Heaven, Hell, Chaos, or the entire Universe are the focus of actions. These supernatural beings contribute to the greater part of the action of Paradise Lost. In fact, the entire narrative is constituted of the action of the supernatural agents.

For instance, God creates Adam and Eve, placing them finally in Paradise. Adam and Eve fall prey to the enticement of Satan, who has already revolted against God drawing legions of Angels on his side and raising a diabolic War in Heaven in which Christ, the Messiah, with the will God, defeats him and his crew. The Angels, Michael and Gabriel vanquish Satan and his crew in the War in Heaven. Adam and Eve are unparadised for their act of 'Disobedience' with Christ shouldering the sins of the entire humanity, thus restoring the blissful seat of Paradise for them. The subject of the poem—the Fall of Man—itself is Biblical involving such characters as Jehovah, Christ, Angels, Satan, Adam and Eve; and the central metaphor of the poem is the continual struggle between good and evil. Professor N. K. Basu finely observes in this regard that:

“We have both human and supernatural characters. Side by side with Adam and Eve, we have God, Messiah, Satan, the good and evil angels, who are superhuman. It is peevish to complain that characters are not human beings and cannot have 'human' interest. The poem is about the struggle between good and evil, and these terrific embodiments of imagined supernatural powers are much more a part of the subject than

Homer's marginal Olympians. Milton's angels or devils excite us because nothing is more exciting to human beings than ideas of good and evil, and because they are really giant projections of human emotions, and aspirations—pride, revolt, treachery, fidelity, courage, hope, and love" (137).

"Milton puts the First Man and the First Woman at the centre of his epic. They are placed in a delicate balance between the devils in Hell and God and the angels in Heaven. The drama is both personal and historic, while the conflict is not of mere physical strength but a moral one, between the opposing forces of good and evil. Adam and Eve are the protagonists in this drama; hence the conflict is internalized in them, and becomes a struggle within the soul of man."(Ajanta Paul xviii).

The fifth characteristic of epic poem is its ceremonial or grand style. An epic is a grand composition and its ceremonial or stately style being substantially away from the stream of common ordinary speech system. Its style is deliberately made appropriate to the formality and technique of the heroic subject of the poem. John Milton has deliberately cultivated a complex formal diction system and a Latinized, elaborate syntax pattern, an eloquent list of names, wide-ranging literary, historical, mythical, natural, astronomical allusions, long involved epic similes, and a novel epithet structure in Paradise Lost which constitute his grand style. Professor N. K. Basu observes on Milton's style thus:

"Milton takes pain to decorate his sublime theme of the poem with the picturesque imagery and profound style. For this mission, he avoids the language of the common people, and uses a somewhat dignified language fashioned after classical literature; it may be called "perspicuous without being mean". It is the language of the poem that makes the most lasting impression upon the readers who get readily acclimatized to Milton's epic manner. The Miltonian idiom is here suited with extreme facility to the largely descriptive tenor of the poem. English blank verse in Milton's hand has grown to be most efficient vehicle of expression and acquired the solemnity and precision of Dante's terza rima. Along with the heroic style, the similes, which Milton brings in course of describing events, contribute to the epic grandeur of the poem"(138).

Paradise Lost excels other known classical epics not only for the loftiness, stateliness of its unique theme but also for its unrivalled, untrammelled grand style. The appropriate word for this poem in this regard is 'sublime' or 'majestic'. John Milton was one of the most learned of the world's epic craftsmen and his language is fraught with Latinisms and is much more superior to common poetic vocabulary. His employment of wide-ranging and sustained similes and metaphors reflects his incombustible classical learning and Renaissance Humanist scholarship. His allusions and similes have provided him with vast space to exhibit his incredible wealth of ancient classical learning and all branches of human knowledge—art, old tradition, history, legend, mythology, natural science, philosophy and astronomy. The sonority of his diction is unparalleled and is well-proportioned to the sublime subject of the poem.

The language, for instance, used in describing the construction of Pandemonium, the theatrical congress in Hell, is highly elaborate and the epithets are wonderfully spontaneous and sonorous:

"Anon out of the earth a Fabrick huge
Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound
Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a Temple, where Pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With Golden Architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or Freeze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n,
The Roof was fretted Gold. Not Babilon,
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equal'd in all thir glories, to inshrine
Belus or Serapis thir Gods, or seat
Thir Kings, when Ægypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxurie. Th' ascending pile
Stood fixt^o her stately highth, and strait the dores
Op'ning thir brazen foulds discover wide
Within, her ample spaces, o're the smooth

And level pavement: from the arched roof
Pendant by subtle Magic many a row
Of Starry Lamps and blazing Cressets fed
With Naphtha and Asphaltus yeilded light
As from a sky.” (PL. 1. 710-730)

Milton follows the practice of his early epic Masters Homer, Virgil, Tasso in introducing his long-tailed, sustained similes into Paradise Lost. The first epic simile employed by Milton is the precise comparison of Satan’s huge body with the Titans, Briareos, Typhon, and the sea-beast Leviathan. It is no surprise that here the vehicles of comparison are so elaborate, imaginatively fascinating that the tenor of the passage is completely lost sight of. Satan’s mighty stature is contrasted with the monstrous size of the Titans, who fought against Uranus, or the Giants who fought against Jove, or the monster Typhon that dwells in a cave in Cilicia, or the sea-monster Leviathan, whom God created hugest of all beings. Satan:

“With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes
That sparkling blaz’d, his other Parts besides
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr’d on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the Den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th’ Ocean stream:
Him haply slumbring on the Norway foam
The Pilot of some small night-founder’d Skiff,
Deeming some Island, oft, as Sea-men tell,
With fixed Anchor in his skaly rind
Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night
Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays:
So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay
Chain’d on the burning Lake..” (PL. 1. 193-210)

Milton’s grand style of language is reflected in the artistic manipulation of stately diction, the richness and loftiness of imagination, and the sublime melody of the movement of his iambic blank verse. The solemnity of poetic expression, elevation of style, the majesty of music are wonderfully woven in the following passage which incorporates the punishment given to Satan for his having invoked the wrath of God through his insolence and rebellion:

“Him the Almighty Power
Hurl’d headlong flaming from th’ Ethereal Skie
With hideous ruine and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
Who durst defie th’ Omnipotent to Arms.” (PL. 1. 44s-49)

The sixth characteristic of epic poem is the unity in design. Epic poems must show a unity in design or unity of plot, oneness of impression. It must deal with a single action, which achieves maturity, as the narrative advances, in the successful execution of plotlines, especially in the epic of art. Milton’s Paradise Lost has a wonderful unity in design. It dexterously knits the single subject, the Fall of Man, maintaining a typical structural architecture of an epic poem. Milton had to exercise his imaginative fertility immensely to weave the narrative framework of the epic fully, leaving no lacunae in between the continuity of the central action. Satan’s revolt against God (Book I), his journey through Chaos to the newly created world (Book II), God’s foreseeing Satan’s success in tempting Adam and Eve (Book III), Satan’s temptation of Eve in a dream (Book IV), the warning of evil to Adam and Eve by the Archangel Raphael (Book V), Adam’s queries about the working of the entire Universe (Book VIII), Adam and Eve’s act of transgression in eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil (Books IX and X), the final

pronouncement of the Judgment on Adam, Eve, and Satan by Christ, the Son of God (Book X), the Archangel Michael's showing the future history up to the Second coming of Christ to Adam (Book XI), the Expulsion of the parents of mankind from Paradise (Book XII)—are all artistically executed in a unique design. Professor N. K. Basu upholds that “Milton maintains in his poem a beginning, a middle, and an end. The action of *Paradise Lost* is contrived in Hell, executed upon earth, and finished in Heaven. All the episodes which have been fabricated throughout the whole poem are centred on one action— the Fall of Man” (136). There can be nothing more sublime than the fine treatment of all these episodes which are thought with brilliant seriousness and sonority. Milton's extraordinary artistic skill in handling the plot of his poem brings in our mind an image of the command and scholarship that he had on classical epic tradition.

Apart from these essential qualities, there are also some epic conventions or formulas in the choice and arrangements of incidents, which are marked well in the epic of growth as well as in the epic of art. These conventions are prominently noted in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* too. John Milton, following epic conventions, begins his epic by stating his argument or epic theme at the very outset and invokes the Heavenly Muse to help him sing his great song about the loss of Paradise by the first parents of mankind. Like Homer and Virgil, Milton indicates the theme of his poem at the very beginning, finally addressing to the Heavenly Muse the epic question:

“Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
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 Heav'nly 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 Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos:.....
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the wayes of God to men.(PL. 1. 1-36)

John Milton was a devout Christian poet. While composing the finest epic of the world *Paradise Lost*, whose subject being derived from the Bible, on the Fall of Man, he confronted a great difficulty in following the classical epic convention—the Invocation to the Muse—which he inherited from Homer's *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*. As the Muses in these classical epics were manifestly pagan, Milton, being a Puritan and Christian poet, refrained from invoking the pagan Muse of epic poetry, Calliope. Instead, he invoked that Heavenly Muse who inspired Prophet Moses on Mount Sinai and Prophet David on Mount Zion. Professor C. M. Bowra finely observes that “Milton's Heavenly Muse is a divine voice, close to the Holy Spirit, whom in his opening lines he invokes immediately after her and calls to illumine and support him; she is the Voice of God that spoke to Moses from Oreb and Sinai. Coming from such a source Milton's poem demands special respect” (196-197).

Milton invokes the Holy Spirit also, for he is certain about the Omniscient nature of the Holy Spirit and he wants to be illuminated by the Spirit in the course of writing the epic so that he may assert God's eternal Providence and justify His ways to men. Milton assumes himself as a shepherd-prophet-poet like Moses, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit on Mount Sinai. Milton's Heavenly Muse is to be distinguished from the classical Greek and Roman goddess of epic poetry. Milton gives her the name 'Urania', who is being referred to in Book VII of *Paradise Lost* thus:

“Descend from Heav'n Urania, by that name
If rightly thou art call'd, whose Voice divine
Following, above th' Olympian Hill I soare,
Above the flight of Pegasean wing.” (PL. 7. 1-4)

Professor N. K. Basu rightly remarks that:

“To draw a complete parallel between the Classical Muses who haunt the dark colored spring (Aganippe) that rises by the altar of Zeus (according to Hesoid) and the Heavenly Muse, Milton has given the classical conception a scriptural touch by mentioning the spring (Siloa's brook) that flows by the temple of the Almighty, referred to in Psalm XXVIII as “thy holy Oracle”” (141).

Another convention of the classical epic is that the narrative should start in medias res meaning ‘in the middle of things’. The action of an epic should begin abruptly in the middle of things or events. John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* begins neither just at the start of the single action, the Fall of Man, nor at the end of it, but rather in the middle in which we notice Satan with his Angels fallen in the fiery gulf of Hell. Milton begins the poem with an episode, the Fall of Satan, which not only arrests our attention but also sustains it throughout the poem. As the poem opens, we are instantly introduced to the miserable condition of Satan, who is now lying stunned in the sulphurous lake of Hell after having been expelled from Paradise by God. Who is Satan? Why is there a large number of Angels with him? Why is he in the fiery gulf of Hell? What is the cause of this capital punishment? — all these questions start haunting our mind at the very outset. John Milton himself writes in the Argument of Book I that the first Book proposes the whole subject—Man’s disobedience and the loss of Paradise wherein he was placed. It also touches upon the prime cause of his Fall—Satan, who, revolting from God and drawing to his side many legions of Angels, was driven out of Paradise with all his accomplices, and was cast into the bottomless pit of Hell. Which action passes over, the poem hastes into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his crew fallen into the fiery gulf of Hell. The poet in the later Books of the poem recounts at length all the incidents that happened before the Fall of Satan. It is a classical epic convention which Milton observes properly in *Paradise Lost*.

Providing a full-length catalogue of the principal characters in a formal manner is another striking convention of classical epic. John Milton gives a detailed list of the fallen Angels in the middle portion of Book I which throws much light on their varied temperaments and moral character. Joseph Addison maintains in his *Spectator Papers* on Milton that “The long list of the deities is intended as a counterpart to Homer’s catalogue of the ships and Virgil’s list of warriors” (qtd. in Basu 96). Milton, following the epic convention, invokes the Heavenly Muse to help him remember one by one all the pagan gods (actually the fallen Angels) who were being worshipped by the children of Adam long after their fall from Heaven. The comprehensive list of the fallen angels perplexes us as an irrefutable survey of the immorality, perversions, inhumanity, cruelty, sinfulness, bloody sacrifice, and meanness of the practice that were prevalent at that time. The nomenclature includes such fallen Angels as Moloch, Chemos, Baalim, Ashtaroath, Thammuz, Dagon, Rimmon, Belial, Isis, Osiris, and Mammon. It is worth mentioning that these names are not the ones which the fallen Angels had once borne in Heaven before their fall. The original names were blotted out from the Heaven’s Book of Life by Almighty God. According to Professor C. M. Bowra:

“In *Paradise Lost* we find all the familiar features of the epic such as war, single combats, perilous journeys, beautiful gardens, marvelous buildings, visions of the world and of the future, expositions of the structure of the universe, and scenes in Heaven and in Hell. Yet all these are so transformed that their significance and even their aesthetic appeal are new. The reason is that Milton has grafted his epic manner onto a subject which lies outside the main epic tradition. By finding his subject in the Bible, he had to make the machinery of epic conform to a spirit and to a tradition far removed from Virgil” (196).

“Milton’s style in *Paradise Lost* has justly been described as the grand style. The grand style is one that, on account of the greatness of a conception, the exercise of a rich imagination, employment of dignified words arranged in an impressive and harmonious order, and the use of certain technical devices, produces an impression of bigness, or enormity, or vastness, or loftiness in the readers’ mind” (Lall 282). Free march of noble thoughts, consummate sound patterns, compactness of word which encapsulate the whole idea conceived, proper pauses and finish in construction, majesty in the movement of verse, order in sustained narration, clarity of definition, unfamiliar grammatical construction with syntax mostly modelled on Latin verse, structure of phrases and epithets, solemnity and sonority of the melody of syllables, grandeur of polysyllabic words, appropriate accent and stress in proportion to the theme, comprehensiveness of allusions with their power of suggestion and implication, proper names calling forth a vista of classical Humanist knowledge, epic devices like Homeric similes, incorporation of a host of genres like lyric, love-song, hymn, elegy, allegory, sardonic and mock-heroic passages, dialogic, soliloquy, and large units of flexible blank verse—all these constitute the grand style of *Paradise Lost*.

To conclude, it must be recognized that John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is a quintessence of ‘literary’ epic in the Classical mould. It possesses all the attributes of literary epic and is a ‘sublime’ epic by virtue of its qualities and originality. It is diametrically different from other world epics in terms of its subject, manner of treatment, and execution of the epic design. The timelessness of *Paradise Lost* lies in the beauty and charm of its language and grand style. The readers of *Paradise Lost* at times feel sandwiched between the hope of illumination and the labour of reading without intellectual relaxation. The rhetorical devices of *Paradise Lost* are engaging, striking, original, and highly persuasive forming the fundamental heroic strain of the poem. *Paradise Lost* is an epic poem per se

whose language, style, structure, and rhetorical devices constitute the centrality of Milton's unparalleled epic workmanship. *Paradise Lost* is an instance of a life-long devotion to Classical learning and Humanist scholarship.

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