

Early modern europe, paradise lost by charles milton



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How has Milton adapted the generic conventions of epic to Christian cultural purposes in writing *Paradise Lost*? John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is considered one of the greatest in English literature. It is a narrative of magnificent proportion depicting the Christian story, which is the Fall of Man, in twelve books, taking after the structure of Virgil's *Aenid*. It used concepts from various sources such as the Bible, Paganism and classical Greek references. Milton explored Christian cultural themes through these elements, interweaving them into a narrative that adapted the generic conventions of the epic genre.

As with other typical epics, Milton began in the middle of the action, telling the tale about how Satan fell, and then proceeding on to recreating different components of epic action such as the recollection of a previous golden world and the fantastic depiction of a battle, which in itself is an epic on its own. In Book IX, the epic tragedy is recounted. It is in this part wherein epic components are reordered (as what happened in many parts of the tale to suit specific thematic requirements) in such a way that underscores the Christian cultural purposes, specifically about transcendental concerns instead of the secular. For example, the reader is made to "listen" to Satan's famous monologue. The soliloquy reflected clearly his state of mind and provided for an excellent prelude to an extensive discourse on the religious theme of man's fall from grace and universality of such condition as demonstrated in the manner which angel fell as well. This device - the lyric and discursive genres - has been embedded in various parts of the narrative and engages the reader when Milton wanted to depict a religious point such as an individual's personal struggle.

Milton used tragedy to underscore Christian purposes as well. For instance, <https://assignbuster.com/early-modern-europe-paradise-lost-by-charles-milton/>

the reactions to the Fall reflected the Aristotelian conception of classical tragedy wherein the plot involved a drastic change in the protagonists fate from happiness to misery. This device is particularly effective in Milton's depiction of a Christian heroic protagonist. In lines 13 through 48 of Book IX, for instance, it was stated that true heroism is not about military greatness or some courtly grandeur. The Fall provided an excellent backdrop to underscore the idea that heroism can be had in man's spiritual struggle. There is the Christian reference to the phrase "of patience and heroic martyrdom," [32] which would be repeated through Books X-XII. Milton rejected the well-beaten path in epic narration by celebrating the ideal individual as well as his relations with others as inspired by the "celestial patroness" instead of the old preoccupation with particular military and imperial rulers. In the opening phrases, this has been firmly established:

No more talk where God or Angel Guest [1]

With Man, as with his Friend, familiar used.

In Paradise Lost, epic conventions were employed - the narrative structure, form, themes and conventions. However, this is done to narrate a groundbreaking epic theme, one that extols Christian values and one that makes us think about our current cultural value systems, moving or evolving higher than the celebration of physical strength and violence. The epic narrative, including the devices used, was conventional and fundamentally identical to its generic forebears in its heroic depiction but the message Milton wanted to impart was radically different. This made Paradise Lost an insightful Christian artifact besides a literary gem.