Following a background study of the Eighteenth Century reaction to Milton and a brief survey of Milton's critical heritage we may now turn to a discussion of this reaction from direct sources. In the present chapter, focus will be thrown on the four representative critics of the age; whom (as I have already stated in the preface) I have placed not in chronological order but in order of their importance as Milton critics.

The tradition of Milton criticism was established mainly by four major critics of Eighteenth Century viz. Joseph Addison, John Dennis, Dr. Johnson and Alexander Pope. Of them broadly speaking, the first two were Milton admirers, the latter two Milton detractors.

Addison's criticism gained momentous importance as it first set the tune of the Eighteenth Century chorus of Milton praise, which continued uninterrupted for a long time, till Dr. Johnson's censures came to jar its harmony. John Dennis got recognition primarily as the main supporter of Addison but he also added some bold, original ideas to his appreciation of the Seventeenth Century poet. Dr. Johnson's criticism is specially significant for the counter wave it unleashed in the
field of Milton-criticism against the Addisonian idolatry and for its anticipatory character too. Pope's censures provoked curiosity as they represented the attitudes of the "Correct School" and the critic was himself an epoch making practicing poet.

Addison paid his earliest tribute to Milton as early as 1694 in An Account of the Greatest English Poets. It was typical of all his later utterances about the poet as the following lines will show clearly:

"But Milton next, with high and haughty stalks,
Unfettered in majestic numbers walks
No vulgar heroes can his muse ingage,
Nor earth's wide scene confine his hallow'd rage"

OR

"Whatever his pen describes I more than see,
Whilst every verse, array'd in majesty
Bold and Sublime, my whole attention draws
And seems above the critics nicer laws"

The reflections of Addison and Steele on Milton in the Tatler during the first quarter of the century

contributed much to develop a taste for Milton among the common readers of the day. The two men of letters focused on the numerous beauties scattered in Milton's poem, in their counter attacks against foregoing Milton critics like Dryden who spoke about the defects of Milton's epic. Their observations in the Tatler (No 141) were quite emphatic and clearcut as the following lines will show: "The additional satisfaction, from the taste of pleasures in the society of one we love is admirably described in Milton (P.L.IV, 639-56).

The variety of images in this passage is infinitely pleasing and the recapitulation of each particular image, with a little varying of the expression makes one of the finest turns of words that I have ever seen, which I rather mention because Mr. Dryden has said in his preface to Juvenal, that he could meet with no turn of words in Milton".

In 1712, Addison started to write on Milton separately. He wrote consecutively six general papers on

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2. The Tatler, ed. by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, No. 141, 31 December 1709.
3. The Tatler, ed. by Joseph Addison and R. Steele, No. 141 December 31, 1709.
Paradise Lost and twelve individual papers on the twelve books of the epic. These papers have been so far reprinted more often than any work on the poet, and they have exerted tremendous influence in forming public opinion about Milton since their original publication. Addison initially started his work as a reply to Mr. Dryden's derogatory comment that, Paradise Lost could not be called a true Heroric poem.

Thus, with an avowed scheme, in first four papers, Addison made a general assessment of Milton's epic. First, he analysed the fable of Paradise Lost and discovered that it fulfilled the Aristotelian theory of "oneness", "entity" and "greatness" quite sufficiently. Milton, like his epic predecessors started his story "res medias" and allowed in his plots only such episodes as naturally arose from his subject. Addison observed that Milton, by introducing a parallel subplot in the epic enhanced the unity of his main plot to a greater extent. On the other hand, conforming to the rule of entirety, Milton in a planned way contrived the action of Paradise Lost in Hell, executed it upon Earth and punished it by Heaven to make a clearcut beginning, middle and end, and the three parts of the poem grew out of one another in a most natural order. Addison said, the action in Milton excelled both the formers viz. Homer and Virgil, in this particular. Again, the poet out-did his predecessors also with the "greatness" of his fable, as its concern was the whole species of mankind in stead of a single person or a single

5. The Spectator No.267, 5 Jan, 1712
6. Ibid. 7. The Spectator No.267, 5 Jan, 1712.
nation\(^8\). Moreover, there was an indispensible and unquestioned magnificence in every part of *Paradise Lost* and its action was enriched with such a variety of circumstances\(^9\).

After plot, Addison discussed the characters of Milton's epic\(^10\). He focussed first, on the varieties of them and analysed how, in the poem, the whole species of Mankind was initially represented in Adam and Eve, and gradually four characters grew out of these two, man and woman in the highest innocence and perfection and man and woman, in the most object state of guilt and infirmity. The first pair included two novel and unique creatures but the latter pair is quite familair to us, though, it consisted of two most magnificent characters that human imagination had ever created.

To add to these stock-characters, Milton introduced two shadowy and fictitious creations of his own imagination viz. Sin and Death. But Addison was not happy with the poet's inventions, as according to him, these two

\(^{8}\) I bid. Op cit.
\(^{9}\) Ibid.
\(^{10}\) The Spectator No.273, 12 Jan, 1712.
imaginary characters were quite out of place in an epic and their intrusion in a narrative like *Paradise Lost* definitely hampered the measure of propriety and probability. The critic was, however, fully satisfied with Milton's portrayal of Satan. He said, in comparison with Ulysses the portrait of Satan was drawn on a much vaster scale. The great Enemy of Mankind made a much longer Voyage than Ulysses in *Odyssey*, put into practice many more wiles and stratagems and hid himself under a greater variety of shapes and appearances. Addison also appreciated the delineation of the remaining members of the infernal assembly. On the other hand, Milton's presentation of the whole God-head, exerting itself towards Man, in its full benevolence, under the three-fold distinctions of a Creator, a Redeemer, and a Comforter appealed to him much, and the images of the Angels like Raphael, Uriel, Gabriel; Michael seemed to him as diversified and distinguished in their proper parts as the Gods are in Homer or Virgil.

Addison in his discussion of the characters of *Paradise Lost* observed on the unique universal appeal

of Adam and Eve. He said, Aeneas and Achilles were indeed great and they appealed to the Greeks and the Romans respectively with special sentiment. But, Adam and Eve, being the first parents of the whole human species, had universal appeal for all readers, irrespective of nation and age. All had equal concern for them, "Since, we are (all) embarked with them on the same Bottom and must be pertakers of their happiness or Misery." The unique relationship of Adam and Eve to man in general, gave them a great advantage over all other characters of world literature.

After characters, Addison, discussed the sentiments of Paradise Lost. He said, the sentiments of Milton's epic were characterised by propriety and a divine sublimity. But regarding the first characteristic he gave us a timely reminder that since most of Milton's characters did "lie out of nature and were to be formed purely by his Invention," we should not judge the propriety of their thoughts and doings by the criterion of our world of reality, which we apply to the characters of Homer and Virgil. Addison illustrated his point by

14. *The Spectator* No. 279, 19 Jan, 1712
saying that the love of Dido and Aeneas was only a copy of what had passed between other persons but Adam and Eve before their fall, being of a different species, their love also was something unique and it was not possible to assess the relation of Adam and Eve with the criterion of man and woman relationship of our own society. When commenting on the sublimity of Milton's sentiments, Addison's praises knew no bound. He said, "Milton's chief talent and indeed his distinguishing excellence lies in the sublimity of his thoughts. There are others of the moderns who rival him in every other part of poetry but in the greatness of his sentiment he triumphs over all the poets both Modern and Ancient, Homer only excepted." A few lines later, in the same paper, the critic remarked with ardent zeal: "it is impossible for the imagination to distend itself with greater ideas than those which he (i.e., Milton) has laid together in his first, second and sixth Books." Addison pointed out some specific sublime passages in Milton's epic which seemed to him parallel to some passages of Homer, that were highly

15. The Spectator No. 297, 19 Jan, 1712
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
praised by Longinus. The critic, also referred to some "affected" or "unnatural" sentiments in *Paradise Lost* for which he regarded Milton and his age both equally responsible. Considering the literary trends of the Seventeenth Century, he gave Milton credit for not indulging in more affectedness. The only piece that offended Addison in the whole of *Paradise Lost* as vulgar or mean was the passage where the evil spirits were described as bantering the Angels upon the success of their newly invented Artillery. But then, such lapses into burlesque, Addison pointed out, also abounded in the ancient masters and he illustrated the point by citing several examples from Homer.

Addison examined the language of Milton's epic mainly according to Aristotle's theory of perspicuity and sublimity and he discovered that Milton had elevated the language of his poem from the common speech exactly by the methods prescribed by the Greek theoretician. Thus, he used quite a good number of bold and just metaphors\(^\text{18}\) which however were not so thickly sown as to clash with one another but only appeared in scarcity of proper and natural words. He introduced

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\(^{18}\) eg. *Paradise Lost* bk VI, 579-80, bk VII 463, bk IX, 130
a lot of foreign words or phrases and even foreign constructions like lengthening of phrases either by inserting some words or by extending or contracting particular words by the insertion or omission of certain syllables. Addison amply illustrated each category of Milton's rhetorical devices citing examples from different books of Paradise Lost. He also referred to Milton's own coinages like "Cerberean", "Miscreated", "Hell-doom'd", "Embryon Atoms" etc. As defects in the language of Paradise Lost Addison pointed out the occasional linguistic lapses in different books of Paradise Lost into vulgar and familiar. In these lapses he noted too much redundancy of foreign idioms like Latin, Greek or Hebrew phrases which had rendered Milton's style, though admirable in general, in some places too much stiffened and obscure.

Addison appreciated Milton's numbers and the artful variety introduced in it by the poet's use of Elision and other innovations. He observed that the English poet, in the length of his verses and their

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19. eg. Paradise Lost bk 11, ll 474-6, bk V, ll 395-7, bk x, ll 733-6.
20. The Spectator No. 285. Elision is cutting of 'Y' when it precedes a vowel.
running into one another generally followed Homer instead of Virgil.

Addison, to prove that he was not an absolutely blind supporter of Milton, also criticised the defects of the very constituent elements of Milton's epic. Firstly, regarding the fable of *Paradise Lost*, the critic raised objections for its unhappy ending, insertion of the limbo of vanity allegory, and also for the poet's too frequent autobiographical digressions in this objective poem. The story of *Paradise Lost* showed Adam and Eve sinking from a state of innocence and happiness into the most abject condition of sin and sorrow. Such a fable with an unhappy catastrophe, the critic observed, though it might be most perfect in a tragedy, was not so proper in an heroic poem. Addison thought that Milton himself also was aware of this inherent drawback of his plot and it was just to balance it that he introduced in the final stage of his poem such occurrences as Satan's mortification just when the Archangel was going to celebrate his victory over Mankind and Adam's vision from the mountain, or Man's

triumph over Devil and his restoration to a happier paradise.

Addison added little to the controversy over the hero of *Paradise Lost*. For, he reflected in the same paper, that as Milton's epic was a narrative poem any discussion about its 'hero' was quite irrelevant. But still, it was already made a topic of discussion by his foregoing critic, and Addison said, if thus the question of choice cropped up at all, he would surely declare Messiah and none else, as the hero of Milton's epic. Addison expressed dissatisfaction with the allegory of the limbo of vanity, as it, according to him, seriously lacked in the measure of probability.

As to the autobiographical digressions in *Paradise Lost* like the poet's complaint for his blindness, his panegyric on marriage, reflections on Adam and Eve going naked or on the Angel's eating he said, such subjective reflections were definitely improper in the midst of an objective narrative like *Paradise Lost*. The critic here referred to the authority of Aristotle who also strictly forbade the intrusion of such elements in a narrative. But, in spite of their impropriety, Addison was captivated by their appeal and he confessed
that "there is so great a Beauty in these very Digressions that I would not wish them out of the poem".

Again, with the exception of the two fictitious creations, sin and death, all characters of Paradise Lost were approved and appreciated by Addison. But the critic had some reservations regarding the sentiments of the poem, mainly on two grounds. Firstly, he said, among the sentiments of Paradise Lost, "there are several of them too much pointed and some that degenerate into puns". Secondly, he said, Milton's ideas offended the readers' imagination by representing heathen fables as truth or matter of facts. Addison also complained against the indecency of frequent and unnecessary ostentations of learning on the part of the poet throughout his poem. Regarding the defects of Milton's language, he maintained, that it was often too much laboured and sometimes obscured by old words, transpositions and foreign idioms. The poet also often affected a kind of jingle in his words which was an absolutely poor and trifling rhetorical device. Again Milton's excessive use of technical words, or terms of art like "cornice" or "the equator" often

23. The Spectator No. 297 Feb, 9, 1712
24. ibid.
25. eg. Paradise Lost bk 11, 1,3, bk VII 11 868-9, bk IV, L. 181
26. The Spectator, No. 297, Feb 9, 1712
27. ibid.
stood in the way of the general readers' understanding of the poem. Addison, however, supported Milton in taking recourse to the assistances of foreign language, as he thought, the poet's sentiments and ideas were so wonderfully sublime that their full strength and beauty could not have been expressed in English alone. Milton's vernacular sunk under him, was unequal to that greatness of soul which furnished with his glorious conception.

After preparing a balance sheet of merits and demerits of the four basic ingredients of Milton's epic, Addison next pointed out the particular beauties of the poem. For this purpose, he bestowed one paper on each book of the poem and showed with numerous illustrations from all books, different kinds of beauty of the epic. He noted how some passages of the poem were beautiful by being sublime, others by being soft, others by being natural\textsuperscript{28} and at the same time, discovered which of them were recommended by the passion, which by moral, which by sentiment and which by the expression\textsuperscript{29}. The critic also showed how the genius of the poet shone in the poem by a happy invention or a distant allusion or a judicious

\textsuperscript{28} The Spectator No. 303, Feb 16, 1712
\textsuperscript{29} The Spectator No. 303, Feb 16, 1712.
imitation and how he had copied or improved Homer or Virgil, and raised his own imagination by the use which he had made of several poetical passages in the scripture 30.

In the first paper Addison marked out the very first lines of *Paradise Lost* for their plain, simple and unadorned manner of introduction of the subject of the epic that resembled Homer. He also praised Milton's invocation for the propriety and nobility of both language and sentiment. The description of Hell in the first book appeared to him a "great and fruitful invention" and the noble circumstances of the Angels' "Nine days' astonishment" represented the poet's "fine imagination".

Milton's brief introduction of Satan in this first book which very finely contained all the hints of his characteristic qualities that would be gradually exposed in the succeeding books, as well as the Archangel's initial speeches were highly praised by Addison. He set apart ll 192-6, 221-7, 284-6, 314-5, 589-91, 250-3, 285-93 as particularly beautiful strokes in the portraiture of Satan.

The catalogue of the fallen angels seemed judicious to him and the description of the pandemonium full of

beauties. The critic did not overlook even such little brilliances as the stature of Azazel, the infernal standard, the ghastly light by which the fiends appeared to one another in their place of torment, and the shout of the whole host of fallen angels when drawn up in the battle array. Addison, while examining the first book, also gave his observation on Milton's similes. Like Homer and Virgil, he noted, the English poet too, in his similes, often rose to some very great idea which was often foreign to the initial occasion. The resemblance did not perhaps last above a line or two but the poet ran on with the hint till he had raised of it some glorious image or sentiment, proper to inflame the mind of the reader and to give it that sublime kind of entertainment, which was suitable to the nature of the Heroic Poem.\(^31\)

In his study of the second book of Paradise Lost Addison first focussed on the consistency in the growth of Milton's characters\(^32\). He elaborately showed how the characters of Moloch, Belial, Mammon and Beelzebub underwent a very natural development in this book from

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31. Opus
32. The Spectator No. 309, Feb 23, 1712
their introductory position in the first book and at
the same time maintained a natural continuity from what
we find of them in flash-back in the description of the
Angels' battle in the sixth book.

According to the critic, the Heavenly prophecy in
this book about the creation of man had a sublime beauty
about it and he pointed out how Virgil too, in a similar
fashion, honoured the birth of the Roman-commonwealth.

Addison was highly moved by the poetical and
sublime description of the rise of the infernal assembly
in the book. The narration of the diversions of the fallen
angels too appealed to him with its pæignancy of thought
and copiousness of invention. The picture of Hell in
ll 624-8, also seemed to be finely imagined. The descrip­
tion of the flights of Satan to the gates of Hell too
 appealed to him. But Addison regarded the allegory of
sin and death as simply worthless. The description of
the Hell gates and their opening was very poetical and
full of Miltonic spirit. As to the imaginary persons
whom Satan met in his voyage, Addison said, they main­
tained a greater measure of probability. On the other
hand, Satan's discovery of the earth, with the glimmering
light from the utmost verge of creation was also wonder­
fully beautiful and poetical.
In his study of the third book, Addison, at the very outset, gave his opinion that the nature of Milton's genius was wonderfully turned to sublimity. He further observed that the poet himself also was conscious of the fact and accordingly he selected the subject of his epic of such a nature that everything that was truly great and astonishing might have a place in it.

The third book of the poem, however, being mainly dedicated to the divine personages, there was little scope here for the play of Milton's own imagination. Addison said the appeal of this book lay in the divine love and fervent religious fear of the poet that vibrated in the whole description of Divinity, and its particular beauty consisted in that shortness and perspicuity of style in which the poet had couched the greatest mysteries of Christianity, and drawn together in a regular scheme, the whole dispensation of Providence with respect of man.

The critic also traced the prints of Milton's original imagination in this book, in the description of Satan's approach to the confines of the creation and drew our attention to the beauty and propriety of the scene. The closing of the Divine colloquy and the Hymn of the Angels that followed upon it also seemed to him essentially poetical.
Satan's visions of the universe both from distance and upon near approach were at the same time natural and noble, while the critic reflected, his survey of the whole face of nature filled the mind of the reader with as surprising and glorious an idea as any that arose in the whole poem. Satan's flight between the worlds with particular account of the sun was narrated with luxuriant imagination. Addison also appreciated Milton's placing of an angel in the sun as a "finely contrived" poetic strategy in complete conformity with the rule of poetical probability.

Addison studied the fourth book of Paradise Lost under three heads viz. the pictures of still life, the machines which comprehended the speeches and behaviours of the good and bad Angels and the conduct of Adam and Eve. Regarding the still-life sketches, he observed, these landscape pictures of the fourth book being "formed upon the short sketch which we have of it in the Holy writ, wear here all the ornaments of Diction\(^33\), and the poet had made the natural background so much a part of the human drama staged on it that even the thought of

\(^{33}\)The Spectator No 309, Feb 23, 1712
Adam and Eve got a paradisical flavour. The critic also referred to Milton's use of more florid and elaborate expression in this part of the poem than in any other place.

In discussing the "machines" Addison recapitulated all the incidents narrated in this book from Satan's entry into Paradise, his leaping over its wall, to his departure with the hanging out of the golden scales in Heaven. He said all the actions of the Archangel were marked by beauty, propriety and art. The critic however did not like the account of Uriel's voyage between the earth and the Sun on the Sunbeam because the description seemed to him a pettiness below the genius of Milton.

Addison remarked that the conduct of Adam and Eve, were all filled with sentiments quite proper for their state of innocence. In this stage, the warmth of love and the profession of it with artifice or hyperbole had made the man speak the most endearing things without depending from his natural dignity and the woman received them without departing from the modesty of her character.

34. The Spectator No. 321, March 8, 1712.
35. Ibid. Ibid.
Thus, the critic reflected, the mutual subordination of two sexes was wonderfully maintained. He referred, in particular, to the pleasing images and sentiments in the evening discussion of our parents and to the masterly artistry shown in their evening worship. He observed that in this book Eve's femininity was remarkable and her speech was dressed up in such a soft and natural turn of words and sentiments as could never be sufficiently admired.

Addison continued his study on the conduct of Milton's characters in his next paper also which he dedicated to the discussion of the fifth book of the epic. The critic analysed there Adam's reaction to Eve when she was disturbed with ominous dreams, and said that it was marked by a splendid beauty of tenderness. The whisper with which he awakened her was the softest that ever was conveyed to a lover's ear. Again, the natural majesty and submissive behaviour of Adam in conference with Raphael as well the angel's solemnity were highly appreciated by the critic. The pleasing images scattered in the description of Eve's housewifry also appealed to him. Addison preferred Milton's

36. The Spectator No. 327 March 15, 1712.
portraiture of Raphael to the portraiture of Raphael by many reputed French, Italian and English poets. He noted that the attitude of Milton's angel towards Adam was filled with all the graces that poetry was capable of bestowing. The description of Heavenly gates too, combined the elements of marvellous and probable quite proportionately having its hint in the scripture and its parallels in Homer. The critic discovered the influence of the Book of Canticles and Homer on Milton's description of Adam-Eve conference.

He also pointed out the similarity between their morning hymn (that inhaled a beautiful spirit of poetry) and a noted psalm. The force of Imagination behind Milton's description of Revolt in Heaven highly moved the critic and he traced out Milton's close imitation of Homer in the lines 755-62.

Addison was charmed by Milton's description of Heavenly war. Milton's poetic imagination was so inflamed with this great scene of action, that wherever he spoke of it, he got excited and rose, if possible, above himself. Again, the poet had presented the whole affair in such images of greatness and terrors as were suitable to the subject. The description of Heavenly War

38. The Spectator 333 March 22, 1712.
39. Paradise Lost, bk VI, 11 320 ff.
was marked with the same type of beauty that was found in Homer's successive battles that were still rising one above another, and improving in horror, towards the conclusion of the Iliad. The critic, by citing numerous examples from this book, pointed out Milton's debts both to his predecessors and Holy script and highly spoke of Milton's great judgement with which he had avoided everything that was mean and trivial in the description of the Latin and Greek poets and at the same time, improved upon the hints which he met within their works upon the subject. As an example, he referred to the image in lines 643-46 of the sixth book and remarked, 'we have here the full majesty of Homer in this short description, improv'd upon by the imagination of Claudius without its puerilities'\(^\text{40}\). Addison discovered in Milton's description of Michael's sword a copy of the sword of Aeneas and in the narration of Satan's injury, an imitation of Homer\(^\text{41}\). Again, the critic observed that Milton in his description of furious Moloch had his eye on Mars in the Iliad while Messiah's chariot and the glorious commission given to

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41. *Paradise Lost*, bk VI 11 320-5.
him were formed upon a vision of Ezekiel and the sublime passage of a realm respectively.

The critic took notice of Milton's style in the presentation of heavenly war and he highly appreciated the poet's timely supply of several speeches, reflections, similitudes, and the like reliefs to diversify his narration and ease the attention of the reader.

Addison commented that if the sixth book of Paradise Lost showed greatness in confusion like a troubled ocean, the seventh book of the poem was marked with a composed and sedate majesty like the ocean in a calm. In this seventh book, he said, Milton, according to Longinus' recommendation to imitate the celebrated authors of antiquity in sublime writing, closely followed the Holy writ in his account of the six-day-work, though he did not take any assistance whatsoever of the heathen writers in this respect. As a result, Milton's poem came to be enriched with some most sublime descriptions like that of Messiah, looking down into the chaos or calming its confusion, or riding into the midst of it and drawing the outline of the Creation of Messiah returning to Heaven, and taking a survey of his great work. Addison further observed that in these descriptions the poet had employed

42. The Spectator No. 339 March 29, 1712
the whole energy of our tongue. He referred to the
description of creation, in particular, where, he said
the poet had comprehended the whole work of creation
within the bounds of an episode and the sametime gave
us a lively idea of it.

In discussing the eighth book of the epic, the
critic reflected that the poet had here interwoven
everything which was delivered upon this subject in Holy
writ with so many beautiful imaginations of his own.
Nothing could be conceived more just and natural than the
whole episode. He cited numerous beautiful passages
from the book. He said there was a great deal of art in
Eve's withdrawing from the meeting of Adam and Raphael
when her husband was giving the account of his passion
and esteem for her in 11 39-58. Again, the angel's
doubtful answer to Adam's enquiries also was marked with
propriety. Addison fully supported Milton's plan of
keeping apart the description of Adam's experience when
he was yet new and fresh from the hands of his creator
for a distinct episode, instead of mixing it up with the
account of six-days' work. The critic set apart the
lines 210-16 and 229-36 of the eighth book from the

43. The Spectator No. 345 April 5, 1712.
dialogue between Adam and the Angel as two shining passages of the poem. Adam's address to the sun and to other parts of creation in ll 273-7 also seemed to him very natural and satisfying to the imagination. The critic remarked that Adam's fancy of losing his existence and falling away into nothing could never be sufficiently admired while the description of his dream in which he preserved his consciousness, and his removal to the Garden gave evidence of the poet's fine imagination. Addison remarked that great strength and judgement were applied in providing the impression of Adam's psychological reaction to the interdiction of the Tree of life. The impression of Adam's psychological reaction bore the mark of Milton's deep insight. The images of beasts and birds passing in view were, on the other hand, simply "beautiful and lively".

With reference to the dialogue between the Almighty and Adam, Addison observed, though it was without any poetical ornaments, it was supported by the beauty of thoughts. Here the poet had wonderfully preserved the character of majesty and condescension in the creator, and at the same time that of humility and adoration in the creature, as amply illustrated in lines 367-80.

44. The Spectator, No 345 April 5, 1712.
As regards conjugal relation between Adam and Eve, the critic reflected that Milton had made of it a noble mixture of rapture and innocence and at the same time assimilated in it the seeds of the impending fatal catastrophe with great art. The critic also observed that becoming deference and gratitude of Adam, while bidding good-bye to the angel, reflected a certain dignity and greatness in him.

Addison observed that Homer, Virgil and Milton—all three epic poets composed their immortal poems, more or less, out of the materials-in-stock. Of them the basis of Milton's poem was shortest. Still, the English poet made of it one of the most entertaining fables that invention ever produced. The ninth book, according to him, revealed the highest degree of Milton's inventive power. The principal beauty of this book consisted in the disposition and contrivance of the fable, which had more story in it, and was fuller of incidents, than any other book of the whole poem. The critic focussed on some particularly beautiful situations presented in this book. Satan gliding through the garden under the resemblance of a mist in

45. The Spectator No. 351 April 12, 1712.
11.179-84 seemed to him very poetical and surprising and the description of morning wonderfully suitable to the divine poem. The critic said, there was great art also in the presentation of the first dispute between our general parents and there were remarkable beauties in the several whiles which were put into practic by their tempter. Addison also appreciated the pleasing images of nature intermixed in this part of the story with its gradual progress to the fatal catastrophe. According to Addison, the first effect of the eating of the forbidden fruit was conceived by Milton with a wonderful imagination and he described it in very natural sentiments of secret intoxication of pleasure, with all those transient flushings of guilt and joy. The critic further pointed out that Adam's talks with Eve, after having eaten the forbidden fruit, was an exact copy of the dialogue between Jupiter and Juno in the fourteenth **Iliad**46.

Addison compared the tenth book of **Paradise Lost** with the last act of a well-written tragedy. It drew up all the characters together and represented them under those circumstances in which the determination

46. Op cit.
of the action placed them initially. Thus, the celestial guards were shown as returning to Heaven after having performed their duty in Paradise and a divine representative was sent to pronounce sentence upon the three offenders.

Addison pointed out the poetical beauty in "the guilt and confusion of our first parents who were now standing naked before their judge". Again there was a fine play of sublime imagination in the description of the Angels heaving up the earth and placing it in a different posture to the sun from what it had been before the fall of Man. The description of Satan's transformation also moved Addison much. He cited it as an example of the fact that Milton never failed of improving upon his hints. The presentation of Adam and Eve after the fall seemed to him very artistically contrived to influence the readers with pity and compassion towards them. The critic referred to Adam's speech in lines 771-82 of this book which was full of emotions, and varied with all those sentiments which we might suppose very natural to a mind, so broken and disturbed. He also cited the passage which narrated Eve's renewal of her address to Adam and the following

47. The Spectator No. 357 April 19, 1712.
lines (909-24) as two exquisitely "moving and pathatick" passages of the book.

In this paper Addison again reflected on the imaginary persons of Sin and Death with his same former attitude. His sense of propriety was disturbed by their lack of probability. The beautiful circumstance of Adam and Eve offering their prayer in lines 1098-1102 on the very spot where their judge pronounced their sentences was however very much appreciated by him.

The critic focussed on Milton's wonderful art in describing that variety of passions which arose in our first parents upon the breach of the commandment and pointed out the particularly impressive situations in this description. The narration of the assembling of all angels of heaven to hear the solemn decree passed upon Man seemed to him highly effective and the conference of Adam and Eve touched his mind with moving sentiments. To the critic, the sight of the Lion and the Eagle pursuing each other was meaningful while the representation of the sun in an eclipse was sheer poetic beauty. Eve's complaint upon hearing that she was to be removed from Paradise was particularly soft and womanish.

48. The Spectator No. 363 April 26, 1712.
49. Ibid.
while Adam's speeches, though equally moving, had a more masculine and elevated turn. The critic discovered a sublime and poetical beauty in the lines 315-33. Adam's vision from the highest mount of Paradise appealed to him both with its beauty and variety and Adam's reaction to it seemed to him only natural. While narrating the Vision, Addison pointed out, Milton had his eye upon Ovid's account of the Universal Deluge but he avoided everything that was redundant or puerile in the Latin poet. The Vision, according to the critic, illustrated the greatness of the plan of Milton's epic which was superior to both Iliad and Aeneid. Addison also drew attention to the short allegory in which the acceptance of our parents' prayer was conveyed and he discovered that it was nothing but a poetical version of the incident in Rev. VIII, 3-4. On the other hand, the lines 127-30 of bk XI contained the poetical vision of Ezekiel in Scripture. The critic observed, the single circumstance of the removal of our parents from the Garden was extended and diversified with so many surprising incidents, and pleasing episodes in the eleventh and the twelfth book, and he declared that these two last books of Paradise Lost could by no means be looked upon as unequal parts
of this Divine poem.

Addison, in discussing the last book of Milton's epic said that the narration of the later half of the History of mankind in it was definitely less appealing than the vision of the former book. With a dissatisfied mind the critic reflected that if Milton's poem flagged anywhere, it was in this narrative part. Here the author was totally absorbed with divinity and neglected his poetry.

But even this narrative part had its own occasional beauties. For example, the critic pointed out the account of the confusion among the builders of Babel, the short sketch of the plagues of Egypt, and the description of the storm of hail and fire with a darkness that overspread the land for three days. Addison also discovered a particular liveliness in the lines 128-49 of bk XII where the Angel saw the patriarch actually travelling towards the Land of promise. The joy and gladness of Adam upon his discovery of the Messiah, and his rapture and transport when he found the Redemption of Man completed and paradise again renewed, seemed to the critic very natural. He said Milton had, by making Adam happy at the height of his misery, made up, to

some extent, the intrinsic deficiency of his epic fable consisting in its unhappy ending. He also pointed out, how to serve the same purpose, the poet presented Satan too in his last appearance under the lowest state of mortification and disappointment.

Addison found the end of Milton's epic absolutely moral and the last speeches of the poem full of instructive sentiments. But for him, it would have been better for Milton to end his poem with the passage containing lines 641-47 than with the two verses which followed. The description of the motion of the Angels to take possession of paradise (624-34) seemed to the critic very "Poetical" and the concluding lines of the poem, he said, were a most glorious blaze of poetical images and expressions.

Addison's opinion regarding the redivision of Paradise Lost was that it was introduced by Milton not merely to achieve an outward resemblance with Virgil but "for the more just and regular Disposition of the great work". He discovered the moral of the epic in the sermon- "Obedience to the will of God makes men happy and disobedience makes them miserable". There were, of

51. Opcit.
course an infinite number of under-morals too which went to make this epic more useful and instructive than any other poem in any language. Addison in the last part of his criticism also gave a mathametical account of the time-span covered in Milton's poem.

The critic again wrote about Milton's imagination in a separate article and there he declared with ardent zeal: "if I were to name a poet that is a perfect master in all these arts of working on the imagination, I think Milton may pass for one, and if his Paradise Lost falls short of the Aeneid or Iliad in this respect, it proceed rather from the fault of the language in which it is written than any defect of the genius in the author."52.

Addison's criticism of Milton exerted a tremendous influence on the poet's critical heritage from the very beginning and set the tradition of Milton-worship in the Eighteenth Century. Addison's contribution to Milton criticism in general was most poetically recognised by the then poet laureate Eusden in 1714. Addressing the critic Eusden said that if Milton had

52. The Spectator No. 471 June 28, 1712.
known his commending criticism of the immortal epic

"He would not blush for Faults he rarely knew,
But blush for Glories thus excelled by you".

The next important Eighteenth Century Milton worshipper was John Dennis. Broadly speaking, Dennis echoed Addison's opinions. So, to avoid repetition, we shall not go into details of his criticism but dwell on his those comments only which at the same time represent the critic's general attitude and reflect his peculiar likings and antipathies. Dennis took Longinus' ideals as his own tenets in his Milton criticism, and as such in *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) highly appreciated Milton's sublimity. He cited numerous examples of this peculiar characteristic of the poet from *Paradise Lost* and sometimes also gave information about the sources of this characteristic. The critic, also made comparative studies between Milton and his preceding epic poets in justification of his Milton idolatry.

Dennis was highly moved and exalted by the description of Lucifer in *Paradise Lost* bk I, (11 589-601). He discovered the motivating force of the whole account, in the greatness of ideas which infused into the poet, admiration and a noble pride, which express'd make the spirit which is Stately and Majestic till the last and then it grows vehement, because the Idea which causes it, is not only great, but very terrible. For all the
afflicting passions that are violent, are expressed with Vehemence\textsuperscript{54}.

The account of creation also in the seventh book of Milton's epic appealed to Dennis very much. He preferred it even to the accounts of creation by Ovid and Virgil. Milton, Dennis thought, was certainly greater than Ovid by the force of his own genius, as much as by the advantage of his religion whereas, he excelled Virgil only by the latter\textsuperscript{55}. As regards genius, Dennis observed, Virgil stood on the top-most rank. Milton fell short of Virgil also in the continual harmony of versification, constant beauty of expression and perpetual exaltation. The critic, however, attributed the English Poet's failures in these respects, to the fact that he "writ in a language that was not capable of such beauty or so much Harmony"\textsuperscript{56}, and his inequality proceeded also from his want of art to manage his subject, and make it constantly great. But, in spite of

\textsuperscript{54} The Advancement and Reformation of Modern poetry, (1701), John Dennis; The critical works of John Dennis (1939) ed. E.N. Hooker i, p. 219.

\textsuperscript{55} The critical works of John Dennis, P. 220.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
all these, the critic hastened to add, still Milton very often excelled the prince of the Roman Poets, both in the greatness of his thought and spirit. Milton's angel too was superior to Virgil's God.

The images in lines 449-53 and 453-72 in the seventh book of *Paradise Lost* received Dennis's special appreciation for their number and proper thickness. When we look at them, the critic said, "the eye is entertained, Admiration is raised to a Height, and the Reason is supremely satisfied". Again they were so natural and peculiar to the subject that they would have been absurd and extravagant in any other. The critic was also moved by the 'energetic' image in lines 463-466, the great and wonderful image in lines 466-469 and the admirable image in lines 469-470 of the second book of the epic. Analysing these similes, he observed, Milton in his images "began to rise even before he was finished, and his Horns were finished in rising".

Dennis wholeheartedly supported Milton's incorporation of poetry with Religion in his epic. This assimilation, he thought, was a must to reach the desired height and he also added that Christian religion was particularly agreeable to the design of poetry in general.

57. Opcit.
58. Ibid.
In 1704, Dennis published his observations of Paradise Lost in The Grounds of criticism in Poetry. Here the critic threw light on Milton's originality and novelty as well as on his inheritance of the tradition. Dennis said Milton was one of the greatest and most daring geniuses that had appeared in the world, and he had made his country a glorious present of the most lofty and most irregular poem, that had been produced by the mind of Man. The critic later tried to justify Milton's irregularity by the fact that the poet went out of the convention which was introduced by Homer and regularised as "Rules" of the Epic Poem by Aristotle, to produce something original according to the intrinsic demand of his own Poem. Epic writers who wrote ever since the time of Homer were all copyists. The English poet wanted to distinguish himself from them and he was successful in his attempt. Dennis remarked: "Milton was the first who in the space of almost 4000 years resolved for his country's honour, and his own to present the world with an original poem, that is to say, a poem that should have his own thoughts, his own images and his own spirit." 60.


60. Ibid.
Dennis thought, Milton's deviation from Homer with regards to the nature of his subject was very subtle and significant. In Homer, the action lay chiefly between Man and Man but Milton, in his poem, set the Devil on one side and man on the other, and presented the former as his "hero" (who bests the better). Again, he pointed out, Milton's characters and for that matter, the actions of Paradise Lost being materially different from what Homer or Aristotle ever thought of, Paradise Lost should not be subjected to the rules of the ancients. Dennis, however, never claimed that Milton was original always and in all respects. He rather pointed out that Milton's thought, images and by consequence his spirits were sometimes vastly traditional in the line of Homer of Virgil. He said Milton's traditionalism would become obvious only if one made a comparative study between the description of Hell by Milton in Paradise Lost and that by Homer and Virgil in their poems. Dennis, in his own study, highly exalted the English poet for his improvements over the traditional stocks-in-trade and at the same time focussed on certain defects in Milton's work which ought to have been avoided with utmost caution by the poet.
In "To Judas Iscariot, Esq. on the Degeneracy of Public Taste", Dennis reflected on Milton's reputation. He praised the Italians as they recognised Milton's greatness when he went to their country in the very bloom of his youth, 'even thirty years before that incomparable poem was writ'. To the critic the Epigram of Selvaggi seemed to be a noble recognition of Milton's genius. The Italians discovered the great and growing genius of Milton even by his "juvenile essays". Dennis, really, felt pity for his own countrymen who, in contrast, were so ignorant about the epic poet of their own and could not recognise his merit even thirty years after he had published among them "the noblest poem in the world".

An epitome of Dennis's attitude towards Milton was revealed in his Letters on Milton and Wycherley. The proposals for printing by Subscription...Miscellaneous Tracts (1721-1722). Here, the critic observed that in spite of his great admiration for Homer and Virgil he reserved his highest esteem for Milton for the sublimity of his thought. He said, the English poet "carried away the prize of sublimity from both Antients and Moderns".

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62. Ibid.
63. Dennis' Letter No. I to Dr. S (i.e. George Swell, a medical practitioner) The Critical Works of John Dennis II pp 221-3.
64. Ibid.
Sublimity was indeed, Milton's distinguishing characteristic and it set him above average Man. Again, Milton's sublimity itself was distinguished from that of all other foregoing poets. His words implied ten times more than what they expressed literally, and according to the critic, that was the surest and noblest mark and the most transporting effect of sublimity. Dennis amply illustrated this unique quality of Milton's sublimity by marking out some matchless beauties from *Paradise Lost*. He cited the sublime description of Satan from the first book of the poem and the Archangel's speech with a noble apostrophe to the sun from the fourth.

In *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* the critic illustrated Milton's excellence by citing the descriptions of the descent of Raphael and the glorious Hymn to the creater from the fifth book and the divine colloquy between God and Adam from the eighth.

In a letter, again, Dennis endeavoured to prove with suitable examples that there was remarkable simplicity in Milton's description of the Battle of Angels, infinitely superior to the simplicity of the

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65. Letter No. 11, "Letter on Milton and Wicherley, the proposals for printing by subscription ...

Battle of Homer's Gods and Heroes in the twentieth Iliad. The critic later charged Addison and Roscommon for not taking notice of the sublime beauties of Milton's Heavenly war. In The Advancement and Reformation of Modern poetry the critic focussed on the vast advantages Milton had over Ovid and even over Virgil in his description of chaos and the creation. Dennis however could not be happy with the "Machines" in Paradise Lost. The machines in Milton's poem, according to him, seemed to "have the appearance of something that is inconsistent and contradictory, for, in them the poet seems to confound Body and Mind, Spirit and Matter". But after a thorough analysis, the critic himself nullified his own objection by stating that both the good and bad angels, though in themselves pure spirits and uncompounded essences, yet on occasion were supposed to either voluntarily assume bodies or to assume them by superior power and divine command and this was exactly Milton's notion of things in Paradise Lost bk I, ll 423-31. Still, the critic added, even if the propriety of Milton's 'machines' was asserted, they definitely appeared less delightful to us than the Gods and Goddesses of the Grecian and Roman poetry. The Gods and Goddesses in the ancient poems came nearest to 66. Opcit.
human nature as they feigned to have manifest bodies and apparent human shapes and maintained the agreeable distinction between sexes and naturally appealed to us more than the greater, more wonderful, and more terrible machines of Milton. In the postscript, however, the critic tempered his adverse remarks on the English poet by praising his descriptions of such good angels as Raphael and Michael. These divine beings, Dennis noted, appeared before our parents assuming bodies which were akin to human shapes. They assumed bodies to exact response from human sight and they took human forms in particular, for, Milton could know of no shape that had more dignity than the human. But Dennis was unable to justify Milton's description of the fallen angels in the first and second book of the poem. These angels were introduced as incorporeal beings, pure uncompounded essences, and at the same time given shapes that came near to human and three of the five animal senses, (viz. seeing, hearing and feeling) which was obvious from their communicating with each other in their own infernal regions. Dennis observed that with such inconsistency Milton had only unfavourably deviated from Cowley in the first book of his Davideis: and Tass.

67. Opcit.
Dennis's criticism of Milton, it is obvious from the above discussion, contained all the main approaches of Milton criticism of his time. But unfortunately, his works are little known to Milton readers of to-day. Shawcross rightly said, if Dennis's critical works were duly familiar among later Milton critics, many modern supposed to-be new concepts about Milton would have turned to be redis-coveries only.

Addison and Dennis together exalted Milton to the highest peak of admiration and most of the minor critics of the age joined them to turn their duet into a chorus of praise. The uniformity of their chorus continued uninterrupted for a long period. It was, for the first time shattered, with a jarring note, by a strong counter charge from Dr. Samuel Johnson. Johnson was a man of stalwart character and commonsense. He was opinionative and independent, blunt and dogmatic, holding fast by a Tory Patriotism and with his temperament he could discover little good either in Milton the man or in his political and ecclesiastical ideas. But, none the less, as if by way of giving even to the devil his due, he offered some heartfelt appreciation for the bulk of Milton's literary works, particularly for his epic, in spite of all his antipathy towards the poet.

In 1751, Johnson first spoke about Milton in a significant way. In that year, in three of his Rambler articles he wrote on Milton's versification and in two other series of the same periodical, examined Samson Agonistes. In the first three articles Johnson focussed on the irregularity and non-conventional character of
Milton's verse and an absence of proper relation between sound and sense in it. The critic was obviously unhappy with Milton's versification and he expressed regret that in spite of the contemporary vogue of Milton-worship all around, he was unable to fall in line.

In his analysis of *Samson Agonistes* in Rambler No. 139 Johnson discovered that the drama had a beginning and an end all right but it wanted a 'middle' proper. In Rambler No. 140 the critic discussed the improprieties as well as beauties of the sentiments of this drama and came to conclude that the former greatly out-numbered the latter. Johnson wrote his famous biography of Milton in 1779. In this biography he chronologically unfolded the different chapters of the Poet's life, and after narrating each, added some sarcastic comments to it, like a sting in the tail, which was surely provoked by a strong personal feeling of antipathy. The critic and the criticised, indeed, were of utterly opposite disposition and the former turned out to be "simply unable" to bear with the temperamental difference in the latter. His numerous remarks on Milton's personal character and his ideologies are a clear evidence of this basic antipathy of Johnson.

70. Vide. *The Lives of the most eminent English Poets with critical observations on their Works*, Dr. Samuel Johnson, 1779 and 1781.
To illustrate, in this biography, the author elaborately narrated how Milton, in his college days, raised objections to the prevailing educational system as it permitted men designated for orders in the church to act in plays, but only a few days later this very man revealed how he enjoyed with great luxuriance, the compensation which the pleasures of the theatre afforded him during his exile from college. Such inconsistency in attitude and fickle mindedness seemed to Johnson to be "sufficiently peevish" for a man like Milton.

In fact, the critic went on elaborating, Milton himself first entered the university with a plan to join the church but later he gave it up as he discovered that whoever became a clergyman had to "take an oath which unless he took with a conscience that could retch, he must straight perjure himself." Johnson interpreted the change in Milton's plan by making a total psychoanalysis of the poet and discovered that the very mental make up of Milton was allergic to any thought of obedience, no matter whether it was canonical or civil.71

Johnson observed that the poet was suffering from some sort of vanity complex and his frugal praise for

others was a clear evidence of it. An egotist as he was, Milton considered his very mention of a name as a security against the waste of time and certain preservative against oblivion. Milton was an exhibitionist also and his publication of the Italian testimonials before his poems was a sure proof of his attitude. Johnson discovered a savageness of manners in the very title of "Of prelatical Episcopacy and whether it may be Deduced from the Apostolical Times, by Virtue of these Testimonies which are alleged to that purpose in some Late Treatises, one where of Goes under the Name of James Lord Bishop of Armagh. Again, though he was greatly impressed by the calm confidence with which Milton expressed his high opinion of his own powers in The Reason of Church Government (1642), he was shocked by the subsequent pamphlets upon the same topic because of their "gloomy seriousness". There is such malignity in them, he said, "hell grows darker at his frown. The Doctrine of Divorce seemed to Johnson absolutely useless and he commented, "it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than of confutation". Johnson could hardly stomach Milton's

72. Opcit 80  
73. Ibid, pp 82, 83.  
74. Ibid, pp 84-5.  
75. Ibid p. 86.
dissention from the Presbytarians which was gradually accomplished from the time of the publication of this doctrine, and in an enraged tone he remarked, "he, who changes his party by humour is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest, he loves himself rather than truth". In spite of all his antipathy Johnson, however, recognised Milton's generosity revealed in his receiving his wife and her relatives during the dark days of the Royalists. Johnson did not agree with Milton's plea for the liberty of unlicensed printing in Areopagitica and considered it to be not more than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted, because by our own laws we can hang a thief.

Milton's remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels irritated him to a great extent. He, again, suspected the poet to have interpolated a prayer from Sidney's Arcadia in Icon Basilike and impute it to the king in his Iconoclastes to charge him for the use of this prayer as with a heavy crime. This conviction simply repulsed Johnson. He was also disgusted by the poet's quarrel with Salmasius and very critical about Milton's service to Cromwell's leadership and commented in

76. Op cit, P. 87.
77. Ibid. P. 88.
bitterness, "nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery, that he, who had justified the murder of his king, should now sell his services, and his flatteries to a tyrant of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful." 78.

Johnson thought Milton's quarrel in "Defensio Secunda" with Morus (or More), to be simply nasty and he said, in this Second Defense the rudeness of Milton's invective was "equalled by the grossness of his flatteries". Milton's Self defence too seemed quite unsatisfactory to him. In this pamphlet, he remarked, there was no want of vehemence nor eloquence nor did Milton forget he wanted wit. Johnson also mentioned the composition and publication of Milton's later works like Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes, The Means of Removing Hirelings out of the Church and A Readie and Easie way to Establish a Tree Commonwealth but, unusually, added no stinging comments in his reference to them. To the controversy over how Milton's name got enlisted in the Act of Oblivion, Johnson presented his own view that here something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion for his ability and distress respectively. The poet was now poor and blind and "who would pursue an illustrious enemy,"

78. Op cit P. 90.
depressed by fortune, and discarded by nature?" Milton after Restoration published *Accidence Commen(i* Grammar in 1661 and Johnson observed that it showed enough proof of "his Zeal for learning". Milton published History of England in 1668 regarding which the critic remarked its style is harsh, but it has something of rough vigour, which perhaps may often strike, though it cannot please. In 1672 *Art-is Logicae plenior Institutio ad petri Rami Methodum Cinnmata* was published. It was a book of Logic, for the imitation of students in philosophy. Johnson discovered in the very fact of the composition of the book a kind of humble dignity, which did not disdain the meanest services to literature. As regards the *Treatise of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration and the Best Means to Prevent the Growth of Popery*, which the poet published immediately after the book of logic, the critic observed, "this little tract is moderately written, with respectful mention of the Church of England and an appeal to the thirtynine articles." But the collection

79. Opcit
80. Ibid P 104.
81. Ibid P 133.
82. Ibid. PP 114-5.
83. Ibid P 115.
of *Familiar Epistles* in Latin, to which some academical exercises were also added, seemed to Johnson wholly worthless "for which, nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader"\(^\text{84}\).

Along with the detail account of Milton\(^*\) as a political thinker, in his biography, Johnson also provided us with a very intimate picture of Milton the man\(^\text{85}\). Introducing him with a detail description of his family background he focussed chronologically on the different chapters of Milton's life, from his childhood, schooldays, university years, foreign tour, participation in the field of politics and religion, marriages, his services to the Cromwell government and his disposition after the Restoration upto the last years of his life which he passed as a poor, blind and ill man. Johnson himself believed it to be a fact that Milton suffered corporal correction in the university and was temporarily rusticated from it. On the other hand, he thought that it was the appreciation that Milton received during his tour abroad that strengthened him with enough self confidence and creative hope to "leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not

\(^\text{84. *Opit.* P 115.}\)
\(^\text{85. *Ibid* P 116-122.}\)
willingly let it die".

According to Johnson's idea, in appearance, Milton was short but eminently beautiful with light brown hair parted at the foretop and hungdown upon his shoulders and eyes quick though not bright. Again he was active and vigorous and skilful in the exercises of the sword. Milton was a severe student and learnt all the languages recognised as learned and polite. According to Johnson, Milton followed a regular routine in his study. The poet drank little, fed on very frugal diet, and did not care much for wealth. Jonson thought among the English poets Milton had the greatest concern for Spenser, Shakespeare and Cowley, while he regarded Dryden as best as a rhymist.

According to the Critic, Milton's theological opinions at first had been calvinistic but afterwards, they leaned towards Arminianism from the time he began to hate the presbyterians. Milton's religious position was indeed dangerous. Johnson observed, "He was not of the church of Rome, he was not of the church of England", and "he grew old without any visible worship." But

here the critic relented a little by declaring that we cannot say indeed that Milton lived without prayer, for "his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer".\textsuperscript{87}

Johnson however could never reconcile with Milton's antiroyalist political sentiments and he commented in utter disgust: "Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in envy of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control and pride, disdainful of superiority. He hated Monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church, for he hated all whom he was required to obey.\textsuperscript{88}

Johnson thought that in family circle, Milton was quite severe and arbitrary. As it was obvious from his writings, he had a Turkish contempt for females as subordinate and inferior beings, and regarded woman as made only for obedience; and man only for rebellion. He narrated how the poet depressed even his own daughters by a mean and penurious education so that they might not break the ranks. Johnson provided us with a very vivid and lively picture of the poet at his work, as when he

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Dante}. P 119.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid}. P 120.
wrote or dictated in the morning light, sitting obliquely in an elbow chair.

Johnson in his critique kept a whole chapter, reserved for his reflections on Milton's poetical works. He however abstained from making any comment whatsoever on the poet's Italian pieces, as, he confessed, he himself was not much conversant with that language. But the Latin poems of Milton seemed to him lusciously elegant and the critic valued them more for their successful imitation of the ancient writers than for any proof of originality or vigour of sentiment. Again, among the Latin pieces themselves, the critic liked the elegies more than the odes.

Now coming to the main bulk of Milton's poetical production in his mother tongue, Johnson discovered even in the poet's early English poems ample evidence of his genius. But, he said that even then, they failed to make any promise of such a great work as Paradise Lost. These poems had a cast original but this originality, consisted in a repulsive harshness, new combination of words that was not at all pleasing, and laboriously sought rhymes and epithets that were violently applied.

89. Opcit PP 122-146.
90. Ibid P 122.
91. Ibid.
The critic remarked: "Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace; he over-looked the milder excellence of sauvity and softness; he was a Lion that had no skill in dandling the kid." Johnson examined Milton's minor poems one by one. The much eulogised Lycidas with its 'harsh' diction, 'uncertain' rhyme and 'unpleasing' numbers gave the critic least aesthetic satisfaction. The sentiment of the poem also seemed to him, an affected one. Moreover, Johnson said, "in this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art for there is nothing new". The form of the poem was that of a vulgar pastoral, and therefore disgusting. Again, the images in it were long ago exhausted and its inherent improbability always forced dissatisfaction on the mind. The orthodox critic was also offended by Milton's intermingling in this poem of trifling fictions with the most awful, sacred truths as in the character of the shepherd, who was at the same time a feeder of sheep, and an ecclesiastical pastor, and a superintendent of a Christian flock. Johnson made his final comment on the poem with utter disgust: "Surely no man could have fancied that he read Lycidas with pleasure, had he not known its author."  

92. **Opcit.**  
93. **Ibid.** P 124.
Johnson agreed with the majority of Milton critics in his opinion about Milton's "L'Allegro and 11 Renserfo. He said, every man that read them with pleasure. The critic also pointed out that the design of the poems was not "merely to show how objects derived their colours from the mind, by representing the operations of the same things upon the gay and melancholy temper; or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified". Johnson was particularly happy with the images of these two poems but he thought that their diction was not very effective, nor the characters kept sufficiently distinguished as a melancholic note seemed to pervade even the passages of mirth.

Johnson regarded the Mask of Comus as the greatest of Milton's juvenile performances. He discovered the first promise of Paradise Lost in this poem. He said "A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every

period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it. But Johnson found *Comus* defective as a drama. He said that it lacked in probability in the conduct of the two brothers as well as in the circumstance of the epilogue of the attendant spirit. The discourse of the spirit and all the following speeches seemed to him disproportionately lengthy, and he said, they were rather like lectures instead of dialogue animated by reciprocal contention. On the other hand, though the song of *Comus* had an airiness and jollity, for Johnson, it failed to convey any implication of positively corrupt enjoyment. The soliloquies of Comus and the Lady also seemed to him simply 'tedious', though elegant none-the-less. Again, the dispute between the lady and Comus, which was the most animated and effective scene of the drama, according to Johnson, needed a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention and retain it and the songs of the poem, though "Vigorous" and full of images, suffered for the harshness of their diction and lack of musical qualities. Throughout the whole poem the figures seemed to be too bold and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. The critic, in his final assessment, described the *Mask of Comus* as "a drama in the epick style,"
elegantly splendid and tediously instructive\textsuperscript{95}.

Regarding Milton's sonnets Johnson observed that they were not worthy of any particular criticism. In fact, the fabric of sonnet, just for linguistic causes cannot excel in English and the critic observed, considering this intrinsic deficiency, the sonnets of Milton might be labelled at best as "not bad".\textsuperscript{96}

Johnson examined Milton's most controversial work \textit{Paradise Lost}, strictly following neo-classical rules. He praised the poet, first of all, just because he was an epic poet and accepted without question, what the poet himself declared at the very beginning of his work as the aim of his poem. He confirmed that it was really to vindicate the ways of God to man that Milton wrote the poem on the fall of Man and involved in it all the preceeding and succeeding events. Johnson maintained that \textit{Paradise Lost}, merely by dint of its fable and characters gave Milton a higher position as an epic poet than all his predecessors. Johnson remarked that before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, "all other greatness shrinks away". "The weakest of his (i.e.Milton's) agents are the highest and noblest of human beings. Of the other agents

\textsuperscript{95} Op cit PP 126-7.
\textsuperscript{96} I bid PP 127-28.
in the poem, the chief are such as it is irreverence to name them on slight occasions. The rest are lower powers; powers, which only the control of Omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. The critic highly appreciated Milton's portrayal of such characters as mild and communicative Raphael, regal, lofty and dignified Michael, and faithful Abdiel and Gabriel. All these characters, according to him, were portrayed by Milton just as they should be. But the critic felt somewhat uneasy with Milton's characterisation of the Archangel. He said, in Satan's speeches there was little that can give pain to a pious ear. The malignity of Satan foamed in haughtiness and obstinacy; but the expressions were commonly general, and not otherwise offensive than they were wicked. Johnson was however quite satisfied with the portrayal of the Archangel's followers, particularly with the ferocious character of Moloch. All of them, he thought, were "very judiciously discriminated". The characters

of Adam and Eve also, both before and after the fall, seemed to him to be drawn with exact consistency. He said that the love between our parents in the state of their innocence was pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts were without luxury and their dialogue without toil. Their addresses to their Maker had little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. It appeared fruition left them nothing to ask and innocence left them nothing to fear. Johnson went on elaborating, how with guilt entered in their life distrust and discord, mutual accusation and stubborn self-defence; and then Adam and Eve began to regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last, however, they sought shelter in His mercy, softened to repentance, and melted in supplication. Both before and after the fall, the critic noted, the superiority of Adam was diligently sustained.

Johnson, in his study, referred to the unique disposition of the probable and the marvellous in Paradise Lost. He said the substance of Milton's poem, containing the history of Creation and Redemption was truth and in the poem, the probable therefore was marvellous and the
marvellous was probable.

Johnson discussed very little about the "machinery" as of *Paradise Lost*, in the epic everything was conducted by the immediate and visible direction of Heaven. Still, he noted, Milton delivered all the situations in such a way that it seemed, in the poem, no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means. In examining the plot-construction of the epic the critic first observed how artfully the two episodes, containing Raphael's narration of the war in heaven, and Michael's prophetic account of the changes that were to happen in the world, were connected by the poet with the main action of the fall. The first episode was introduced as a necessary warning to Adam, and the other as his consolation. The series of the first episode, the main action of the fall, and the concluding consolation marked clearcut "beginning", "middle" and "end" in Milton's epic. Johnson remarked, there is perhaps no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. He called the digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth book of the epic "superfluities so beautiful".

Johnson did not agree with Dryden when he denied Adam the role of epic-hero just because he was ultimately won over by Satan. He contradicted the earlier critic by maintaining that "there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate"\textsuperscript{100} and forwarded his own argument that even "if success is necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour"\textsuperscript{101}.

Johnson regarded the sentiments of \textit{Paradise Lost} (for the greater part) to be unexceptionally just, and he was fully satisfied by the frequent splendid passages of the poem which contained numerous lessons of morality or precepts of prudence. He said that "sublimity" was Milton's characteristic quality and though Milton sometimes descended to the elegant, in general, his basic element was the great. "He could occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port was gigantic loftiness. He could please when pleasure was required; but it was his peculiar power to astonish." The critic was particularly pleased with Milton's unique\textsuperscript{100} power of displaying the vast,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[100.] Op cit
\item[101.] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful". He noted how Milton's chosen subject also was very congenial to his poetical temperament and provided the poet with sufficient scope for the display of his imagination without any fear of the censure of extravagance. The critic however felt somewhat uneasy about Milton's images and descriptions of the scenes and operations of Nature which he maintained, "do not seem to be always copies from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness and energy of immediate observation. He repeated Dryden's remark that it seemed Milton saw Nature through the spectacles of books and on most occasions called learning to his assistance.

Reflecting on the numerous and various similes in Milton's epic Johnson commented that these often over ran as Milton's fancy, the great excellence of which was amplitude, could not be confined within the limits of rigorous comparison and the poet often expanded the adventitious images "beyond the dimensions which the occasion required."

102. Op cited 133.
103. Ibid 134.
104. Ibid
Johnson highly appreciated Milton's moral sentiments in *Paradise Lost*. He said, in this poem "every line breathed sanctity of thought and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration required the introduction of the rebellious spirits." But he hastened to add, even then these rebellious spirits were compelled by the poet to acknowledge their subjection to God in such a manner as excited reverence, and confirmed piety. Johnson thought Milton's acquaintance with the sacred things contributed to a great extent, to the excellence of his moral sentiment.

After analysing the achievements of *Paradise Lost* Johnson discussed the defects of the poem. According to him, the fable of Milton's epic lacked human interest. He explained, Adam and Eve, though they were our first parents had nothing in common with us. Their heavenly joy in the state of innocence, their sorrow and anxiety at their transgression of the divine instruction were all foreign sentiments to us. On the other hand, the actions and thoughts of God, angels and devils were automatically of remoter world. So how could the thoughts and actions of any of them touch us with common feeling?

Johnson with his classical taste was irritated by Milton's confusion of spirit and matter in his epic but at the same time, he patiently discovered the cause of such confusion. He said that as Milton's design required the description of what cannot be described, and immateriality supplied him no images, the poet was compelled to invest his angels with form and matter.\footnote{106}

Milton's allegory of sin and death however seemed to the critic particularly shocking, as it contained a gross clash between reality and imagination. "Sin is indeed the mother of Death and may be allowed to be the portmessa of hell; but when they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken."\footnote{107} The critic described "this unskilful allegory" as "one of the greatest faults of the poem."\footnote{108}

Johnson detected a few inconsistencies in Milton's conduct of the narrative. For example, he referred to the scene in the fourth book of the poem where Satan was dragged in paradise before Gabriel with great expectations but in the long run, was allowed to go away totally unmolested in spite of the readers' anti-
anticipation. Again, while the creation of man was reported to be the consequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulsion of the rebels, Johnson noted that Satan mentioned that he had heard about it in heaven before his expulsion. Adam's narration of his dreams to Eve sounded more like the speech of a man acquainted with many other men while he was the first man of God's creation. Johnson also pointed out the shocking mistake committed by Milton in allowing Raphael to speak of "timorous deer" to Adam, before deer were yet timorous and also before Adam could understand the comparison.

Johnson was unhappy also with Milton's play on words, equivocations and his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art in Paradise Lost.

The critic noted the influence of Italian poets on Milton's work and that, too, much to his harm. He observed how Milton's "desire of imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the Paradise of Fools; a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place".

But, like Dryden, Johnson too in his ultimate assessment regarded the defects of Milton's epic as
only occasional flats among its elevations. He argued that Milton, when he had expatiated in the sky, of course, should be allowed sometimes to revisit earth, "for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long?"

In his assessment of Paradise Regained Johnson observed that the poem was "in many parts elegant and everywhere instructive". The basis of the poem was however narrow, and containing only dialogue without action, it lacked, to an extent, in appeal. The critic remarked "Had this poem been written not by Milton but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise."

Samson Agonistes failed to please Johnson in many respects. Firstly, he thought Milton's selection of the form of ancient tragedy in his drama was made just to satisfy his prejudice and bigotry of learning. Then he referred to the great defect of the drama, which consisted in its intermediate parts that had "neither cause nor consequence". Johnson maintained that Milton was unsuccessful in his tragedy also because he "knew human nature only in the gross, and

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110. Ibid. P. 140  
111. Ibid
had never studied the shades of character, not the combinations of conquering, or the perplexity of contending passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach; but had mingled little in the world and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.\textsuperscript{112}

Johnson also made a general discussion of Milton's diction and versification in his critique. He recognised the fact that Milton's made and cast of expression was unique and peculiar. It was different from the diction of all the former writers and also far removed from common speech. But while Addison praised Milton's diction for its unique nature, Johnson condemned it for exactly the same reason. He maintained that the poet, both in prose and poetry, "had formed his style by a perverse and pedantick principle."\textsuperscript{113} Still, the critic could not deny its peculiar charm and he reflected that with all its defects such is the power of Milton's poetry, that "his call was obeyed without resistance. The reader fell himself in captivity to a higher and a noble mind and thus criticism sinks in admiration."\textsuperscript{114} Johnson traced the influence of Tuscan poets in the

\textsuperscript{112} Opcit 142.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid P 142.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
formation of Milton's style, and complimented Milton as the master of his language in its full extent. He said the poet had selected the melodious words with such diligence, that "from his books alone the Art of English poetry might be learned". In Milton's English heroick verse without rhyme the critic traced the influence of Trisino's "Italia Liberata" and regarded the poet's preference for blank verse as a pretention. Milton, the critic said, "finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it was better". Johnson personally thought that English poetry without rhyme was definitely less pleasing than English poetry in rhyme, but he confessed that in spite of his preference he could not wish Milton to be a rhymer, for, he could not wish his work to be other than what it was. Johnson, in his analysis of Milton's epic discovered that the English poet was indebted to Homer for so many things like the structure of his poem, the art of his poetical narration, the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems.

115. Ibid. p 143
116. Ibid.
that surprise and enchain attention. Still, Johnson declared that Milton was the least indebted poet among all followers of Homer. He said the poet had originality of his thoughts. He did not refuse admission to the thought or images of his predecessors but he did not seek them. In his final assessment of Milton's epic Johnson said "Paradise Lost was not the greatest of heroick poems, only because it was not the first.\textsuperscript{117}

Johnson, with his censures of Milton proved himself an iconoclast to his contemporary literary critics but to the modern critics, he appears to be the most reliable guide. And it must be said to his credit that in his judgement on Milton as on Shakespeare, he could, when his passionate love of literature asserted itself, rise above his new-classical prejudices.

\footnote{117. Opcit P 145.}
The enlistment of Pope's name as a major Milton critic requires some explanation. To speak the truth, Pope did not say much about Milton, by dint of which he could be enrolled with Addison, Dennis and Johnson. But, Pope systematised and regularised the literary tenets applied by the three other major critics and in the Eighteenth Century criticism he was regarded as an authority among the contemporary critics as Dryden was in the previous age. Moreover, Pope being the most representative practicing poet of his day, his comments on Milton, however scanty they were, carried much extra significance and it does not seem justifiable to dump such a critical authority with a number of minor critics of the age.

Pope's most significant reflection on Milton is to be found in his *Postscript to Odessey* (1723) and his attitude to the seventeenth century poet also becomes obvious from his Comments on Bentley's edition of Milton. In the post-script, the critic discouraged Milton-imitators of his day, by observing that their imitations were nothing but caricatures of their original. They were using only Milton's mannerism.
without discrimination and could not catch the spirit of their model. Pope observed that Milton was very meticulous about the use of his words. "He used exotic words or phrases much more where the subject is marvellous, vast and strange, as in the scenes of Heaven, Hell, Chaos & C, than when it is turned to the natural or agreeable, as in the pictures of entertainments of angels, and the like". But most of Milton's Eighteenth century imitators followed him without any discrimination of these subtle differences. Pope highly praised the fifth book, the later part of the eighth, the former of the tenth, and the eleventh books and the narration of Michael in the twelfth book of Paradise Lost, for the simplicity and purity of Milton's style. But he strongly condemned the obscurity of Milton's style in other parts of the epic. He discovered that in Milton's speeches, where clearness was above all necessary, there was frequently such transposition and forced construction that the very sense of them could not be discovered without a second or third reading. So, the critic warned contemporary Milton imitators against such a dangerous model. Pope, also made some indirect reflections on
Milton through his comments on Bentley's "Milton":

There he said,

"Did Milton's prose, O Charles, thy death defend?
A furious foe unconscious proved a friend
On Milton's verse did Bentley comment?
Know a weak officious friend becomes a foe,
While he but sought his author's fame to further,
The murderous critic has avenged this murther."

In his Essay on Criticism Pope systematised the Eighteenth Century literary tenets/the Milton critics of his day applied in their assessment of the epic poet. Here he observed that Follow Nature — Should be the primary principle of literature. Pope however did not invent this injunction for himself. The classical stoics first made it known for whom it meant, the following of the Moral Law as the central cosmic reality. Renaissance critics also repeated the call in variety of senses according as they interpreted nature as the normal course of the world or as ideal truth by which art should be guided. Pope gave the call with an implication that there was a divinely appointed "right" way for the universe to work and with respect to man, there was a permanent "truth"
of human behaviour and also a basic principle of reason which Art must obey. Thus he declared in his essay,

"First follow Nature, and your judgement frame
By her just standard, which is still the same
Unerring Nature, still diviney bright,
One clear, unchanged, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty, must to be impart,
At once the source, and end and test of Art"\textsuperscript{118}

Pope further elaborated that as these rules of "Nature" were methodised by the Ancients, to follow these ancients was as good as following rules of Nature.

"Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
Are Nature still, but nature methodised:"

And "Nature and Homer were ...... the same
Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem
To copy nature is to copy them\textsuperscript{119}

But the critic however did not prefer mechanical obedience to 'Nature' to independent creative genius. He maintained, creative genius was not only to follow conventions, set by Natural rules but it might also

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Essay on Criticism} ll 68-73.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.} ll 138-40.
establish new conventions quite independently. He said, "Some beauties yet no precept can declare", for, there are "nameless graces which no methods teach", and

"Pegasus, a nearer way to take
May boldly deviate from the common track".

Pope explained the meaning of 'Wit' in the Eighteenth Century literature in the following lines:

'True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd,
Something, where truth convinced at sight we find,
That gives us back the image of our mind\(^\text{120}\)

Now, all the above mentioned Eighteenth Century literary dicta explained and defined in his Pope's 'Essay' were applied by this or that Milton-critic of his day in their assessment of Milton. They applied the ideal of following 'Nature' propagated by Pope with its moral over-tone and were highly satisfied by the all pervading morality of Milton's works. Again, the revival of classicism, encouraged by the poet-critic in his Essay, drew the critical attention of the contemporary men of letters to the inherent discipline and verbal skill of Milton's

\(^{120}\) Op cit 11 297-300.
works. It was also responsible for frequent comparisons of the English epic poet with the heroic poets of the past like Homer and Virgil. On the other hand, Milton's non-conformities to the ancient rules were granted and supported by many Milton admirers by Pope's encouraging suggestion that,

"Pegasus, a nearer way to take
May boldly deviate from the common track"

The strict adherents of the "Correct School" however highly condemned these nonconformities and often looked askance at Milton for them. They liked to adhere to Pope's emphasises on "correctness" and "reason" and did not appreciate Milton's imaginative luxury which was most richly displayed in epic similes and description of divinities in *Paradise Lost*, and so much appreciated by the precursors of Romanticism. Pope, being a practicing poet of a different school, discovered in Milton's language more stumbling blocks than guidances. But whatever disagreements were there between the mannerisms and modes of thoughts of the two poets, the latter surely recognised the inherent greatness of the former, though on the whole, in his critical opinion about Milton, Pope
was more a Supporter of Johnson than of Addison and Dennis. But, Pope, more or less echoing Johnsonian attitude did not add anything new to Milton's critical heritage and could not exert any specific influence of his own on the subsequent Milton criticism.