

# John Milton

(1608–1674)

Early in his life, John Milton resolved to be a great poet. His teachers and his parents encouraged him in this ambition because they believed, as Milton said later in his life, that he “might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die.” Time has confirmed his parents’ and his teachers’ confidence: Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, his major epic, is one of the most brilliant achievements in English poetry and perhaps the richest and most intricately beautiful poem in the world. Posterity has not let *Paradise Lost* die.

## Fortunate Beginnings

Milton was fortunate in his parents. His father, a musician and prosperous businessman, had Milton educated at St. Paul’s School (which he loved) and Cambridge University (which he hated). Indulged in every way by his parents, Milton spent the next eight years after college (1632–1640) continuing his education by himself, since he firmly believed that a poet must be a person of learning, familiar with ancient and contemporary philosophy, history, languages, and literatures.

## Political Activity: Intelligent Devotion

In the 1640s, an ongoing struggle between King Charles and his Parliament came to a head. Milton, believing that a poet must be active in the life of his time, entered the paper warfare that accompanied the conflict and started publishing prose works—some of them very elaborate and a few of them very insulting—in support of the Parliamentary party. For this reason some people have referred to Milton as a Puritan, but this is a label that has only limited application to a person of Milton’s stature. If he shared some of the Puritans’ ideas and attitudes, such as their extreme dislike of kings and bishops, he also differed greatly from them in other important ways. For instance, he advocated divorce for incompatible married couples, and he argued that the press should be free from government censorship and interference. Although we take these freedoms for granted, most people in the seventeenth century, particularly most Puritans, considered them dangerously radical.

During part of this period, Milton served in the government of England under Oliver Cromwell, who, with the title of lord protector, ruled England after the Parliamentary party had won the Civil Wars and executed King Charles. As Latin secretary to the Council of State, Milton was responsible for translating all correspondence with foreign countries, Latin then being the language of diplomacy.

Milton’s eyesight was gradually failing. By 1652, he could only distinguish day from night; otherwise, by the age of forty-four, before he had finished his life’s work, Milton was totally blind.

## All for Nothing: Milton the Traitor

To Milton the ideal government was a republic in which the most capable, intelligent, and virtuous men would serve as leaders. To establish and maintain such a government in England, he had devoted most of his intelligence and energy for twenty years. Then suddenly, in 1660, the cause for which he had worked so hard became totally discredited; the English recalled their dead king's son from exile and crowned him as King Charles II. Overnight Milton found himself stripped of his possessions and under arrest as a traitor. Fortunately influential friends, including the poet Andrew Marvell (see page 302), intervened, and Milton was allowed to go into retirement rather than to the scaffold. From then on, he lived in seclusion with his three daughters and his third wife, his first two wives and only son having died. By reading aloud to him, his daughters enabled him to carry on the studies he thought necessary for a poet.

## A Subject Fit for an Epic

Being a poet, in Milton's view, meant imitating the great writers of antiquity, the epic poets Homer and Virgil and the Greek dramatists Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Because those writers chose subjects drawn from their own nations' histories, Milton first pondered various English subjects for his works, especially King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. After years of thinking and reading, however, Milton decided that King Arthur's exploits were mainly fictitious, and so he settled on subjects drawn from the Bible.

## *Paradise Lost*: The Work of a Lifetime

Milton published *Paradise Lost* twice: first in a ten-book version in 1667 and then in twelve books in 1674, the year of his death. It's no exaggeration to say that Milton in one way or another worked on this epic all his life. He made many different plans and even once thought of it as a tragedy with Satan, the fallen archangel transformed into the chief devil, as its protagonist. In the finished poem, Satan is still very conspicuous. The first two books are devoted mainly to him, he appears frequently in Books III–X, and Milton lavishes on him some of his most glorious writing. It's not surprising, then, that many readers have regarded Satan as the secret hero of the poem, especially since he receives no such grand treatment in the Bible. Milton was "of the Devil's party without knowing it," asserted the poet and artist William Blake (see page 718). Yet this argument is convincing only to those who concentrate on certain parts of the poem and ignore the rest of it. Moreover, in literary works, evil frequently seems more interesting than good, and if any part of *Paradise Lost* fails from a literary point of view, it is Milton's portrayal of God.

## A Profound Work of Art

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton took relatively few verses from the Bible, mainly Genesis, and developed them into a 10,565-line poem. He used the conventions and devices of the classical epic to make the poem a work of art; he used his great learning and wide experience of human affairs to make the poem profound. Although the poem ranges back and forth between Hell and Heaven, the most important action takes place on Earth, where the first human beings, Adam and Eve, are given the choice of obeying or disobeying God. They choose to disobey, and having done so, they accept their punishment and make the best of the life that is left to them. They are the heroes of Milton's epic, and they represent us all.

## *Paradise Lost*: Milton's Epic

At the very beginning of *Paradise Lost*, Milton describes the content of his epic as "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" (line 16). His allusions to Homer, Virgil, Dante, and a host of lesser epic poets leave no doubt that Milton wanted *Paradise Lost* to sum up and also surpass all previous epics. To write his great literary epic (a **literary epic**, as distinguished from an epic from the oral tradition, is the product of the imagination of an individual writer), Milton followed the examples of the past by using the conventions of the epic. He begins with an invocation to the Muse, he starts the action *in medias res* ("in the middle of things"), and he writes about a grand subject. Above all, Milton follows the epic tradition by casting his poem in an **elevated style** suited to the grand events he is describing, using ornate language, complex syntax, multiple **allusions**, and elaborate comparisons called **epic similes**. (For more about epic conventions, see page 81.) The quality that would set Milton's epic apart, of course, was that it dealt with great deeds on a cosmic scale at the dawn of Creation—rather than with earthly matters.

## A Grand Subject

There is a formal, set way to begin an epic. At the outset, an epic poet does two things: The speaker invokes the Muse (one of the nine Greek goddesses who inspire poets and other practitioners of the arts and sciences) to speak or sing through the poet; and the speaker states the subject of the poem. Milton does both these things in the first, complicated sentence (lines 1–16) of *Paradise Lost*. Grammatically, this sentence begins in line 6 with the command, "Sing, Heavenly Muse." "Sing," says Milton, and now we move back to line 1, "Of man's first disobedience," which is Adam and Eve's first act of disobedience against God, who has forbidden them to eat the fruit of a particular tree in Eden. The result, or "fruit," of their disobedience is expulsion from and loss of Paradise, another name for the Garden of Eden. Yet all is not lost, because a "greater Man" (line 4), Jesus Christ, has restored the possibility of Paradise for the human race.

## Milton's Great Argument

Milton calls this argument "great" (line 24), for he is attempting to resolve a dilemma that has puzzled many people throughout the ages. On the one hand, we are told that through his Eternal Providence (line 25) God takes loving care of Creation; on the other hand, we know that there are many very bad things in the world, such as war, crime, poverty, disease, oppression, and injustice. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton asserts that God is not responsible for these evils; instead, Adam and Eve's disobedience to God "Brought death into the world, and all our woe" (line 3). God gave Adam and Eve the freedom to choose between good and evil, and the strength to resist evil; yet they chose evil, and their offspring—all of us—have suffered the effects of their choice ever since.

This explanation is not original to Milton; many Christians have accepted it for centuries. Yet a reader need not accept this traditional explanation of the evil in the world in order to enjoy and admire the poem. (Indeed, some readers have found evidence in the poem that Milton himself did not really believe it.) The poem is rich enough to provide support for many different interpretations.

## Reading *Paradise Lost*

Milton decided to write his epic in his native language and in Shakespeare's meter, which is **blank verse**, or unrhymed iambic pentameter. Though blank verse was the usual meter in dramatic poetry, it was not used at all for nondramatic poems in Milton's day and for long after. Most of Milton's sentences are long, and many of them are not in normal word order (subject-verb-object). Also, his vocabulary includes words not used in ordinary prose today. (Unfamiliar proper nouns are explained in the notes, but they still have to be understood in their context.)

## Paradise Within

In Milton's heroic, optimistic view of life, goodness was not goodness unless it resulted from a struggle to overcome evil. God purposely let Satan escape from Hell and establish himself on Earth, not only so that Satan's deeds would damn him further but also so that human beings would have something to fight against—and with God's help triumph over. In one of his prose tracts, *Areopagitica* (1644), Milton describes life as a race in which good must compete with bad. Virtue, he says, is not virtue unless it is won in the "dust and heat" of the conflict with evil. And so, when Adam and Eve lose Paradise, they also gain something: the opportunity to prove themselves in the real world. The Archangel Michael, who comes to turn them out of their perfect garden, tells them how to live in the new, imperfect world. Practice good deeds, he says, and patience, temperance, faith, and love, and

then wilt thou be not loath  
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
A Paradise within thee, happier far.

—Book XII, lines 585–587

# The Fall of Satan

## Make the Connection

Why does evil exist? What is the source of its power to fascinate? The struggle of good versus evil is central to *Paradise Lost*—in this case, the conflict exists on a truly epic scale, as Satan first rebels against God (in Book I) and then ensnares Adam and Eve to do likewise (in Book IX). In Milton’s epic and in the Bible, this original choice of evil over good explains the sufferings and the burdens of humanity and our fateful tendencies to misuse reason and freedom, to let pride override fear of God.

## Literary Focus

### Style

The unique manner in which writers use language to express their ideas is called **style**. An author’s style is closely connected to **diction**, or word choice, and **syntax**, or the way sentences are constructed. A writer’s style can be categorized as formal or casual, plain or ornate, abstract or concrete—or by any of a number of other descriptive words.

**Style** is the unique manner in which writers use language to express their ideas. Two of the main aspects of style are diction and syntax.

*For more on Style, see the Handbook of Literary and Historical Terms.*

## Reading Skills

### Milton’s Style

Milton wrote in the 1600s, and on first reading you may be daunted by his style. As you read Milton, you will find it helpful to identify areas of difficulty and apply strategies to deal with them. If you are stalled by an unfamiliar word, try using **context clues** to figure it out. Make use of the **side glosses** that are provided to help you with unfamiliar names and terms. Read and answer the **reading stop** annotations and questions for help understanding key ideas as you go along.

Milton is challenging—just as many good things are. Once you have solved the puzzles posed by Milton’s style, though, you should be hooked by this story of the primal battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil.

*The Fall of Satan*  
from *Paradise Lost*

John Milton

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man<sup>o</sup>  
5     Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse,<sup>o</sup> that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai,<sup>o</sup> didst inspire  
That shepherd,<sup>o</sup> who first taught the chosen seed<sup>o</sup>  
In the beginning how the Heavens and Earth  
10     Rose out of Chaos; or if Sion hill<sup>o</sup>  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook<sup>o</sup> that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
15     Above the Aonian mount,<sup>o</sup> while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.  
And chiefly thou, O Spirit,<sup>o</sup> that dost prefer  
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first  
20     Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss  
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the height of this great argument  
25     I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.  
      Say first, for Heaven hides nothing from thy view  
Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause  
Moved our grand parents<sup>o</sup> in that happy state,  
30     Favored of Heaven so highly, to fall off  
From their Creator, and **transgress** his will  
For one restraint,<sup>o</sup> lords of the world besides?<sup>o</sup>  
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?  
The infernal Serpent;<sup>o</sup> he it was, whose guile,  
35     Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived  
The mother of mankind, what time his pride  
Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host  
Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring  
To set himself in glory above his peers,<sup>o</sup>

4. **one greater Man:** Christ

6. **Heavenly Muse:** Urania, muse of astronomy and sacred poetry. Milton Hopes to be inspired by Urania, just as Moses was inspired to receive God's word for the Hebrews.

7. **Oreb...Sinai:** names for the mountain where Moses received God's inspiration.

8. **shepherd (n):** Moses. **Chosen seed:** the Hebrews

10. **Sion hill:** Zion, a hill near Jerusalem.

11. **Siloa's brook:** stream that flowed past the Temple, "the oracle of God," on Mount Zion.

15. **Aonian mount:** in Greek mythology, Mount Helicon, the home of the Muses.

17. **Spirit:** Holy Spirit; divin inspiration.

29. **grand parents:** Adam and Eve.

32. **one restraint:** the command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

**Besides:** in every other way

34: **Serpent:** Milton is referring to Satan's final form.

39. **peers:** equals; the other archangels.

40 He trusted to have equaled the Most High,  
 If he opposed; and with ambitious aim  
 Against the throne and monarchy of God,  
 Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud  
 With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power

45 Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal<sup>o</sup> sky  
 With hideous ruin and combustion down  
 To bottomless perdition,<sup>o</sup> there to dwell  
 In adamantin<sup>o</sup>e chains and penal<sup>o</sup> fire,  
 Who durst<sup>o</sup> defy the Omnipotent to arms.

50 Nine times the space that measures day and night  
 To mortal men, he with his horrid crew  
 Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf,  
 Confounded though immortal. But his doom  
 Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought

55 Both of lost happiness and lasting pain  
 Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes,  
 That witnessed huge affliction and dismay  
 Mixed with obdurate<sup>o</sup> pride and steadfast hate.  
 At once as far as angels ken<sup>o</sup> he views

60 The dismal situation waste and wild:  
 A dungeon horrible on all sides round  
 As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames  
 No light, but rather darkness visible  
 Served only to discover sights of woe,

65 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
 That comes to all; but torture without end  
 Still urges,<sup>o</sup> and a fiery deluge, fed  
 With ever-burning sulfur unconsumed:

70 Such place Eternal Justice had prepared  
 For those rebellious, here their prison ordain'd  
 In utter darkness, and their portion set  
 As far removed from God and light of Heaven  
 As from the center thrice to the utmost pole.<sup>o</sup>

75 O how unlike the place from whence they fell!  
 There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelm'd  
 With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,  
 He soon discerns, and weltering<sup>o</sup> by his side  
 One next himself in power, and next in crime,

80 Long after known in Palestine, and nam'd  
 Beelzebub.<sup>o</sup> To whom the Arch-Enemy,  
 And then in Heaven call'd Satan,<sup>o</sup> with bold words  
 Breaking the horrid silence thus began:

45. **ethereal**: heavenly.

47. **perdition**: damnation.

48. **adamantine**: unbreakable

**penal**: punishing

49. **durst**: dared

58. **obdurate**: stubborn;  
 unrepentant

59. **ken**: range of view.

68. **still urges**: always afflicts.

74. **center...pole**: three times the distance from Earth, or "center," to the outermost point in the universe. In Milton's cosmos, Earth is the center of ten concentric spheres.

78. **weltering: (v)** used as; (adj) rolling about

81. **Beelzebub**: next in power to Satan; described as prince of the devils in Matthew 12:24.

82. **Satan**: Hebrew for "adversary; oppose."

85 "If thou beest he—but O how fallen! how changed  
 From him, who in the happy realms of light  
 Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine  
 Myriads though bright—if he whom mutual league,  
 United thoughts and counsels, equal hope  
 And hazard in the glorious enterprise,  
 90 Joined with me once, now misery hath joined  
 In equal ruin: into what pit thou seest  
 From what height fallen! so much the stronger proved  
 He with his thunder;° and till then who knew  
 The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,  
 95 Nor what the potent Victor in his rage  
 Can else inflict, do I repent or change,  
 Though changed in outward luster, that fixed mind  
 And high disdain, from sense of injured merit,  
 That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,  
 100 And to the fierce contention brought along  
 Innumerable force of spirits armed  
 That durst dislike his reign, and, me preferring,  
 His utmost power with adverse power opposed  
 In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,  
 105 And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?  
 All is not lost; the unconquerable will,  
 And study° of revenge, immortal hate,  
 And courage never to submit or yield:  
 And what is else not to be overcome?  
 110 That glory never shall his wrath or might  
 Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
 With suppliant° knee, and deify his power  
 Who from the terror of this arm so late  
 Doubted° his empire, that were low indeed,  
 115 That were an ignominy and shame beneath  
 This downfall; since by fate the strength of gods  
 And this empyreal substance° cannot fail,  
 Since through experience of this great event,  
 In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,  
 120 We may with more successful hope resolve  
 To wage by force or guile eternal war  
 Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,  
 Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy  
 Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven."  
 So spake the apostate° Angel, though in pain,  
 Vaunting° aloud, but racked with deep despair;  
 And him thus answered soon his bold compeer:°

93. **He...thunder:** God.

107. **study:** pursuit.

112. **suppliant:** humble

114. **doubted:** archaic for "feared for."

117. **empyreal substance:** heavenly—and therefore indestructible—substance of which all angels (including Satan) are made.

125. **apostate:** guilty of abandoning one's beliefs.

126. **vaunting:** used as adj. boasting

127. **compeer:** companion; equal. Now Beelzebub speaks.

"O Prince, O Chief of many thronèd Powers,  
 That led the embattled Seraphim<sup>o</sup> to war  
 130 Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds  
 Fearless, endangered Heaven's perpetual King,  
 And put to proof his high supremacy,  
 Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate;  
 Too well I see and rue the dire event,<sup>o</sup>  
 135 That with sad overthrow and foul defeat  
 Hath lost us Heaven, and all this mighty host  
 In horrible destruction laid thus low,  
 As far as gods and heavenly essences  
 Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains  
 140 Invincible, and vigor soon returns,  
 Though all our glory extinct, and happy state  
 Here swallowed up in endless misery.  
 But what if he our Conqueror (whom I now  
 Of force<sup>o</sup> believe almighty, since no less  
 145 Than such could have o'erpowered such force as ours)  
 Have left us this our spirit and strength entire  
 Strongly to suffer and support our pains,  
 That we may so suffice<sup>o</sup> his vengeful ire,  
 Or do him mightier service as his thralls<sup>o</sup>  
 150 By right of war, whate'er his business be,  
 Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,  
 Or do his errands in the gloomy deep?  
 What can it then avail,<sup>o</sup> though yet we feel  
 Strength undiminished, or eternal being  
 155 To undergo eternal punishment?"  
 Whereto with speedy words the Arch-Fiend replied:  
 "Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,  
 Doing or suffering:<sup>o</sup> But of this be sure,  
 To do aught<sup>o</sup> good never will be our task,  
 160 But ever to do ill our sole delight,  
 As being the contrary to his high will  
 Whom we resist. If then his providence  
 Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,  
 Our labor must be to pervert that end,  
 165 And out of good still<sup>o</sup> to find means of evil;  
 Which ofttimes may succeed, so as perhaps  
 Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb  
 His inmost counsels from their destined aim.  
 But see the angry Victor<sup>o</sup> hath recalled  
 170 His ministers of vengeance and pursuit  
 Back to the gates of Heaven; the sulfurous hail

129. **Seraphim:** highest order of angels

134. **event:** archaic for "outcome"

144. **of force:** of necessity.

148. **suffice:** archaic for "satisfy"

149. **thralls:** (n pl) slaves

153. **avails:** be of help or advantage

158. **doing or suffering:** whether active or passive.

159. **aught:** used as adj: anything; whatever

165. **still:** always

169. **angry Victor:** God

Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid  
 The fiery surge, that from the precipice  
 Of Heaven received us falling, and the thunder,  
 175 Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,  
 Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now  
 To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.  
 Let us not slip<sup>o</sup> the occasion, whether scorn  
 Or satiate<sup>o</sup> fury yield it from our Foe.  
 180 Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,  
 The seat of desolation, void of light,  
 Save what the glimmering of these livid flames  
 Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend  
 From off the tossing of these fiery waves,  
 185 There rest, if any rest can harbor there,  
 And reassembling our afflicted powers,  
 Consult how we may henceforth most offend  
 Our Enemy, our own loss how repair,  
 How overcome this dire calamity,  
 190 What reinforcement we may gain from hope,  
 If not, what resolution from despair."  
 Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate  
 With head uplift above the wave, and eyes  
 That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides,  
 195 Prone on the flood, extended long and large,  
 Lay floating many a rood,<sup>o</sup> in bulk as huge  
 As whom the fables name of monstrous size,  
 Titanian or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,  
 Briareos or Typhon,<sup>o</sup> whom the den  
 200 By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast  
 Leviathan,<sup>o</sup> which God of all his works  
 Created hugest that swim the ocean stream:  
 Him haply slumbering on the Norway foam,  
 The pilot of some small night-foundered<sup>o</sup> skiff,  
 205 Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
 With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind  
 Moors by his side under the lee, while night  
 Invests<sup>o</sup> the sea, and wishèd morn delays:  
 So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay  
 210 Chained on the burning lake; nor ever thence  
 Had risen or heaved his head, but that the will  
 And high permission of all-ruling Heaven  
 Left him at large to his own dark designs,  
 That with reiterated crimes he might  
 215 Heap on himself damnation, while he sought

178. **slip:** lose

179. **satiate:** used as adj: satisfied

196. **rood:** old unit of measure varying locally from about six to eight yards

198-200. **Titanian....Typhon:** In an epic simile, Milton compares Satan to the Titans and giants of Greek mythology. Briareos, a hundred-handed giant, helped Zues (Jove) battle the Titans. Typhon, a hundred-headed serpent-monster from Cilicia (near Tarsus), attacked heaven and was imprisoned by Zues.

201. **Leviathan:** biblical sea monster, either a reptile or a whale.

204. **night-foundered:** over-taken by night.

208. **invests:** covers.

Evil to others, and enraged might see  
 How all his malice served but to bring forth  
 Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy shown  
 On man by him seduced, but on himself  
 220 Treble confusion, wrath, and vengeance poured.  
 Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool  
 His mighty stature; on each hand the flames  
 Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and rolled  
 In billows, leave in the midst a horrid vale.  
 225 Then with expanded wings he steers his flight  
 Aloft, incumbent<sup>o</sup> on the dusky air  
 That felt unusual weight, till on dry land  
 He lights, if it were land that ever burned  
 With solid, as the lake with liquid fire;  
 230 And such appeared in hue, as when the force  
 Of subterranean wind transports a hill  
 Torn from Pelorus, <sup>o</sup> or the shattered side  
 Of thundering Etna, <sup>o</sup> whose combustible  
 And fueled entrails thence conceiving fire,  
 235 Sublimed<sup>o</sup> with mineral fury, aid the winds,  
 And leave a singèd bottom all involved<sup>o</sup>  
 With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole  
 Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate,  
 Both glorying to have scaped the Stygian<sup>o</sup> flood  
 240 As gods, and by their own recovered strength,  
 Not by the sufferance<sup>o</sup> of supernal<sup>o</sup> power.  
 "Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"  
 Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat  
 That we must change for Heaven, this mournful gloom  
 245 For that celestial light? Be it so, since he  
 Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid  
 What shall be right: farthest from him is best,  
 Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made supreme  
 Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,  
 250 Where joy forever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,  
 Infernal world! and thou, profoundest<sup>o</sup> Hell,  
 Receive thy new possessor; one who brings  
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.  
 The mind is its own place, and in itself  
 255 Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.  
 What matter where, if I be still the same,  
 And what I should be, all but less than he  
 Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least  
 We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built

226. **incumbent:** lying.

232. Pelorus: headland in Sicily, Italy; now called Cape Faro.

233. Etna: volcano in Sicily, Italy

235. sublimed: used as adj. vaporized.

236. involved: enveloped.

239. Stygian: of or like the river Styx; infernal, hellish. In Greek mythology, the river Styx encircles the underworld.

241. sufferance: permission

supernal: heavenly

251. profoundest: lowest; deepest.

260 Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:  
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice  
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:  
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.  
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,  
265 The associates and copartners of our loss,  
Lie thus astonished<sup>o</sup> on the oblivious<sup>o</sup> pool,  
And call them not to share with us their part  
In this unhappy mansion, or once more  
With rallied arms to try what may be yet  
270 Regained in Heaven, or what more lost in Hell?"

266. astonished: used as adj.: dazed

oblivious: causing forgetfulness