

# Milton as a poet

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Milton is the greatest ever poet English literature has ever produced after Shakespeare. In the essay Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca Eliot has said, "Sensibility changes from generation to generation but to change the taste of the time is the work of a great genius." Milton was such a genius who was fed up with the existing trend prevalent on the horizon of English language and deliberately used Latinized diction, expressions and frequent play up on words to set it free from conventional diction to give it new twist and turn which was a distant dream so far. Although his talent was not recognized by critics like Dr. Johnson and Eliot. He had to earn the ire of Dr. Johnson for failing to fulfil the basic requirements of Augustan norms which he craved for in poetry. In his book the Lives of English Poets he has made a scathing attack on Milton insisting that, 'The perusal of Paradise Lost is a duty rather than pleasure.' He on the contrary praised the poetry of lesser poets like Dryden and Pope in high flown words telling that, 'If Pope be not a poet where can poetry be found.' Actually Dr. Johnson treated Milton with a jaundiced eye. Milton's Latinized diction no longer Milton shouted to his Augustan norms and principles. In the same way Keats wrote his ambitious poem Hyperion using Milton's Latinized diction but failed miserably holding Milton responsible for it saying that, "Life to him will be death to me...English must be kept up."

Eliot in his first essay on Milton made a disparaging attack on Milton holding him responsible for corrupting English language, initiating bad taste and causing an adverse impact on the poets from 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In his essay *Metaphysical Poetry* published in the year 1921 Eliot insisted, "In the 17th century a dissociation of sensibility has set in English literature from which we never recovered... the two great poets of the period Dryden and Milton should be held responsible for it." Although E. M. W. Tillyard outright rejected the arguments advanced by Eliot insisting that deterioration had already set in English literature for which the poor fellow should not be held responsible. Eliot responded positively and showered bucketful praise on him saying that, "To lay the burden on the shoulder of Milton and Dryden was a great mistake."

Milton started writing poetry in the second half of his career. He was a learned man and had received formal education. His scholarship is successfully reflected in his poetry. He elevated English poetry by purging out the impurities latent into it and borrowed substantially from Greek mythologies to give English poetry an added charm and grandeur which was never thought of by English poets. He had to suffer immensely with his epical poems *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* which set a new trained field to catch sight of the attention of the critics and forced him to the background. In *Lycidas* too Milton's poetic craftsmanship and artistic grandeur excelled a new height which gave his poetry an added charm and vigour. He has used very pertinent symbols which helped him bring home his ideas more apparently. These symbols are doubly beneficial in the sense that instead of adding beauty to his text it helped him convey his ideas more precisely.