Poetic Hubris as Knowing Transgression in the Invocations of Milton’s Paradise Lost

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This study of the invocations in Paradise Lost attempts to examine the aspects of poetic pride in Milton's efforts to "assert eternal providence;/ And justify the ways of God to men." As Walter Schindler points out, the study of the invocations are important to any study of Milton's poetics because they are not only important markers of major shifts within the epic but defines the epic voices itself. Thus, the poet's stance adopted in the invocations, guides and shapes the larger narrative sections of the poem. Because the poem begins with an invocation that was overly bold in claiming divine inspiration and prophetic powers, it leaves itself open to charges of poetic pride and satanic hubris. A careful examination of all four invocations in the poem, however, reveals a underlying message of humility, patience and sufferance instead. Beginning with prideful ambition, there is a pattern of progressive downward movement in the tone of the invocation, moving from visions of grandeur and the sublime to a more subdued and humble voice at the end. This changes in the poetic voice, I would argue, can be linked to Milton's overall message of "patience and heroic martyrdom" (PL 9.32) in Paradise Lost.

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2. , 1985 , Poetic Pride and Satanic Hubris in Paradise Lost : 23 ~ 31
3. , 1975 , The Mystical Design of Paradise Lost
4. , 1960 , The Opening of Paradise Lost
5. , 1967 , The Epic Voice
6. , 1942 , The Function of the Prologues in Paradise Lost 57 : 697 ~ 704
7. , 1997 , Surprised by Sin:The Reader in Paradise Lost
8. , 1995 , Join Voices All Ye Living Souls Renunciation and Gathering in Milton's Invocations 6.2 : 48 ~ 68
9. , 1977 , Milton and the English Revolution
10. , 1984 , The Experience of Defeat
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1. *Paradise Lost*  
   , 17, 1985, 41-70

   Horace Jeffery Hodges, 11(2), 2001, 41-57

3. *Paradise Lost*  
   Milton, 5, 1995, 197-226

4. *Paradise Lost*  
   Milton, 4, 1994, 91-119

5. *Milton's Views on the Fall of Man in Paradise Lost*  
   Myeong-eun Koh, 9, 1980, 107-130
Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost’ is one of the greatest creations of writing. The invocation comprising the first twenty-six lines of Book one is of excellent making as the Poet invokes God to illuminate him. Milton is always conscious of his blindness which we find in the line, “what in me is dark, illumine.” This poem is both Hebrew and Christian and deals with the profoundest of all problems, “justifying the ways of God to men.” In the first 26 lines, the poet has fused three great civilizations, the main sources of Renaissance religious poetry - classical, Hebrew and Christian. The poet’s sense of dedication to the great Biblical figures and the powerful simplicity represent poetic art of a high order. He calls Christ as God. The water which refreshes him, is the water "In Paradise Lost Milton's imagination is at odds with his convictions." How far do you think this true of Books 1 and 2? Back to top. Examine the character of Satan as displayed in the first two books of Paradise Lost. "Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind." Consider this view with reference to Paradise Lost, 1 and 2. "Milton avoids over-precise description of Hell, knowing that it is more dreadful if kept vague." Referring closely to the poetry, comment on this remark. Back to top. Questions on Book 1 only. "Late angels, new devils": does Milton succeed in describing the fallen angels thus in Book 1 of Paradise Lost? Write an essay on the pictorial element in Book 1 of Paradise Lost. John Milton is the most important poet and the most representative of the Puritan Age. His poetry was influenced by the historical events of his time. From a literary point of view, he was not a man of the age. He was very much interested in the Latin, Greek and Italian culture. In the last period he spent the rest of his life in blindness and poverty, dictating his verses to his daughter. To this period belong Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, a short epic poem which tells of Christ’s victory over the temptation by Satan in the desert, and Samson Agonistes, a tragedy dealing with the biblical story of Samson and the Philistines. Paradise Lost is a secondary/literary epic poem (primary epic is oral, for instance Beowulf, Iliad and Odyssey). It is about Satan’s rebellion against God.