

Notable Quotations about Milton

.... Thy soul was like a Star and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In chearful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on itself did lay.

(Wordsworth, "London, 1802." Public domain edition.)

The Paradise Lost though so fine in itself is a corruption of our Language -- it should be kept as it is unique -- a curiosity, a beautiful and grand Curiosity. The most remarkable Production of the world -- A northern dialect accommodating itself to greek and latin inversions and intonations.

(*The Letters of John Keats*, Vol. 2, edited by Hyder Rollins. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980. 212.)

Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in "Paradise Lost." . . . Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent, in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy -- not from any mistaken notion of bringing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity but with the open and alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments."

(From "A Defence of Poetry." Public domain edition.)

Note -- The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true poet, and of the Devil's party without knowing it.

(*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. William Blake. Public domain edition.)

Wickedness is a myth invented by good people to account for the curious attractiveness of others."

(From "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young. *Chameleon*, Dec. 1894. *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. New York: Harper, 1966.)

The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience.... In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden.

(From "The Metaphysical Poets" in *Selected Essays of T. S. Eliot*. New York: HBJ, 1978, pg. 247.)