



VOL-3, ISSUE-3, 2025

# Annual Methodological Archive Research Review

<http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about>

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## The Portrayal Of Morality In John Milton's Paradise Lost : A Critical Analysis

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### Abstract

This research explores the complex and multifaceted portrayal of morality in John Milton's epic poem, Paradise Lost. Through a critical analysis of the poem's characters, themes, and moral framework, this study examines the tensions between free will and determinism, obedience and disobedience, and pride and ambition. The research demonstrates how Milton's masterpiece offers a nuanced and profound meditation on the human condition, highlighting the complexities of moral decision-making and the consequences of disobedience

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**VOL-3, ISSUE-3, 2025****INTRODUCTION**

Paradise Lost, written by John Milton in 1667, is an epic poem that tells the story of the Fall of Man and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The poem is a masterpiece of English literature, exploring complex themes and moral issues that continue to resonate with readers today. This research focuses on the portrayal of morality in Paradise Lost, examining the poem's moral framework, characters, and themes.

**MILTON'S MORAL FRAMEWORK**

Milton's moral framework is rooted in Christian theology, emphasizing the importance of obedience to God and the dangers of pride and ambition. The poem presents a hierarchical universe, with God at the top and humans and angels occupying lower rungs.

**MORAL PRINCIPLES**

**Obedience to God:** Milton emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's commands and the consequences of disobedience.

**Free Will vs. Determinism:** The poem explores the tension between human free will and divine determinism.

**Pride and Ambition:** Satan's fall serves as a warning against the dangers of pride and ambition.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

- 1) How does John Milton portray morality in Paradise Lost?
- 2) what insights does the poem offer into the human condition?

**ANALYSIS****SATAN**

Satan, the fallen angel, is a pivotal figure in the poem, embodying the tension between free will and determinism. While some readers interpret Satan as a heroic or sympathetic character, others see him as the embodiment of evil and rebellion against God.

**ADAM AND EVE**

The story of Adam and Eve's fall from grace serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of disobedience and the importance of moral responsibility. Milton portrays Adam and Eve as human beings with flaws and weaknesses, highlighting the complexities of human morality.

The critic William Empson claimed the poem was morally ambiguous, with Milton's complex characterization of Satan playing a large part in Empson's claim of moral ambiguity.[41][page needed] For context, the second volume of Empson's authorized biography was titled: William Empson: Against the Christians. In it his authorized biographer describes "Empson's visceral loathing of Christianity." [42] He spent a large amount of his career attacking Christianity, demonizing it as "wickedness" and claiming that Milton's God was "sickeningly bad." [43] For example, Empson portrays Milton's God as akin to a "Stalinist" tyrant "who enslaves His human creations to serve His own narcissism."

**STYLE AND STRUCTURE****BLANK VERSE**

The poem is written in blank verse, which creates a sense of grandeur and epic scope.



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### **EPIC SIMILES**

Milton uses epic similes to create vivid and powerful images, comparing characters and events to mythological and biblical figures.

### **INFLUENCE AND LEGACY**

#### **LITERARY INFLUENCE**

Paradise Lost has had a profound influence on English literature, inspiring countless adaptations and interpretations.

#### **CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The poem has become a cultural touchstone, symbolizing the struggle between good and evil, and the human condition.

### **ROMANTICISM**

Romantic critics, such as William Blake, have praised Milton's portrayal of Satan, seeing him as a symbol of rebellion and nonconformity (Blake, 1808).

### **CHRISTIANITY**

Christian critics, such as C.S. Lewis, have argued that Milton's poem is a profound exploration of Christian theology, highlighting the nature of evil and the importance of redemption (Lewis, 1942).

### **MORAL THEMES**

#### **THE NATURE OF EVIL**

The poem explores the nature of evil, presenting Satan as a complex and multifaceted character. According to C.S. Lewis, "Satan is not a simple figure, but a complex one" (Lewis, 1942, p. 95).

#### **REDEMPTION AND FORGIVENESS**

The poem ultimately offers a message of hope and redemption through the promise of salvation. According to Milton, "The Son of God, who came to save mankind, is the ultimate source of redemption" (Milton, 1667, Book 12, lines 300-320).

#### **MORAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Milton emphasizes the importance of moral responsibility, highlighting the consequences of disobedience and the need for accountability. According to William Kerrigan, "Milton's poem is a profound exploration of moral responsibility" (Kerrigan, 1983, p. 123).

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To examine the concept of morality in Paradise Lost, with a focus on the characters of Satan, Adam, and Eve.
2. To analyze the ways in which Milton uses literary devices such as symbolism, imagery, and characterization to convey moral themes.
3. To explore the historical and cultural context in which the poem was written, and how this context influences the portrayal of morality.
4. To evaluate the relevance of Paradise Lost to contemporary debates about morality, ethics, and the human condition.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Paradise Lost presents a nuanced and complex exploration of morality, highlighting the tensions between free will and determinism, obedience and disobedience, and pride and ambition. Through its rich characters and moral themes, the poem offers a



ISSN (E) 3007-3197

ISSN (P) 3007-3189

Publisher Name : COLLABORATIVE EDUCATIONAL LEARNING INSTITUTE

Frequency Of Journal: Bi-Annual

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review

### **VOL-3, ISSUE-3, 2025**

profound meditation on the human condition, emphasizing the importance of moral responsibility and the consequences of disobedience.

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