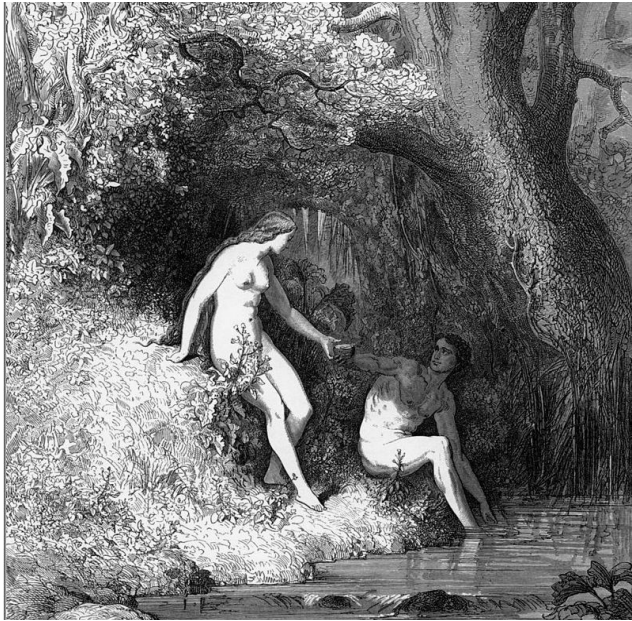


Great Books: Paradise Lost



A study morning

led by

Dr Elaine Oswald

Monday 19 August 2019

from 10-1 p.m.

William Elder Building,
56-58, Castlegate,
Berwick, TD15 1JT.

Join us for an interactive workshop to explore what makes *Paradise Lost* a masterpiece. So why is this 17th century epic poem considered a masterpiece? We'll discuss its symphonic language, its skilful imitation of classical syntax, its breadth of knowledge, its audacity, and the tale itself with its many remarkable characters.

As Emily Dickinson said: "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry." Readers cannot fail to have the tops of their heads taken off by the sublimity of Milton's epic style — the first and still pre-eminent narrative verse in English that rings with the full force of iambic pentameter and the heights of biblical eloquence.

John Milton had the idea for a classical epic poem while still in college. Over a period of close to 40 years, the plans for that epic developed and changed. Not until 1667, when he was blind and finished with government work, did Milton bring all that he had thought and worked on together into a complete epic structure.

In the end, Milton chose not to copy Homer and Virgil, but to create a Christian epic. He chose not to write in hexameters or in rhyme because of the natural limitations of English; instead he wrote in unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse, the most natural of poetic techniques in English. He also chose a new kind of heroism to magnify and thus created a new sort of epic — a Christian epic that focuses not on the military actions that create a nation but on the moral actions that create a world.

It's a poem that shifts from rebel angels waging war in heaven to the pageantry of hell to Adam and Eve in the lush confines of the Garden of Eden, as it wrestles with questions of human freedom, divine providence, political organization, religious tolerance, the relationship between church and state, the possibility of marriage between equals, and—crucially—the nature of good and evil.

Milton is “our greatest public poet”, says author Philip Pullman, whose acclaimed trilogy *His Dark Materials* was inspired by the poem (and takes its title from Book II, line 916). Pullman loves Milton's audacity – his declaration that he will create “Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme” – and his musicality: “No one, not even Shakespeare, surpasses Milton in his command of the sound, the music, the weight and taste and texture of English words”.

While you don't need to read *Paradise Lost* before the workshop, please do bring a copy of the book with you as we shall be using it in class. We will be focussing on Books 1, 2, and 9, and maybe 11 if time permits.

Tickets £9, including refreshments. All are welcome and no previous knowledge is assumed.

If you supply us with your personal data (name, address or email), we will hold this in accordance with our privacy policy, available [here](#) or by request to BEA, 7 Ravensdowne, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1HX. If you have any queries, please email berwickea@gmail.com or phone Cian McHugh on 01289 303254

To book online, please [click here](#) **To book by mail**, please fill in the booking form below, and mail to BEA, 7 Ravensdowne, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1HX along with a cheque in favour of BEA.

Name

Address

Tel No

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Cheque enclosed £

(*Paradise Lost*)

