

Hanford, James Holly, A Milton Handbook Fourth Edition (Appleton-Century-Crofts: N.Y.)  
1926, 1933, 1939, 1946, 1954, 1961

p. 310 Regarding the development of Milton's style and its relation to the tendencies of his age, much has been written. The alterations in the Trinity MS., already alluded to in the discussion of the minor poems, show something of the conscious effort which he made to achieve certain definite qualities. Mr. C. S. Lewis<sup>10</sup> shows that in a dozen or so of the changes in Comus, Milton was deliberately moving away from the dramatic and ebullient in expression toward the "gnomic and poetically chaste."

. . . p. 311 Other changes tell a different story. Milton often substitutes a fresher and more meaningful epithet for a conventional one, as in "opening eyelids of the Morn" for "glimmering eyelids," and "westering wheel" for "burnisht wheel." In general the language of Paradise Lost, especially of the first two books, is bolder and more striking than that of the minor poems. It is also, however, apt to be more condensed, more difficult, and in a sense more severe.

p. 339 On Milton Scholarship in the 18th Century

This activity consisted in: (1) the elaboration of Milton's biography on the basis of earlier records and of the personal material in the prose and poetry; (2) the explanation and illustration of details in the poems; (3) the discovery of sources and analogues for Paradise Lost and in less degree for the other poems. These contributions were generally included in one or another of the innumerable editions of Milton's works. They are, of course, closely connected with the critical discussions already mentioned. The learned editorial labors of Patrick Hume in 1695 were followed in 1732 by Richard Bentley's more sensational but less worthy attempt to constitute a critical text of Paradise Lost according to the methods which, as a classical scholar, he had been accustomed to apply to ancient authors. Bentley made the unwarranted assumption that Milton's work had been corrupted by an editor who, taking advantage of the poet's blindness, had interpolated passages and made minor changes to the detriment of the meter and the meaning. In his attempt to restore the poem to its original form, Bentley, guided solely by his idea of what Milton ought to have said, exhibits the most extraordinary bad taste and judgment.