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Question: "Milton is undoubtedly, the only English poet of 16th and 17th centuries, who can claim himself as a creative artist." Discuss.

Answer: - The first charge, which is brought against Milton as an artist, is that he is not original, he borrowed to such an extent as to degrade his artistic talent. No doubt, this charge against him does hold some grain of truth as Milton has borrowed more than any other writer, and exhausted every source of imitation, sacred or profane, yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer. Milton did not write as other writers did from a casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength and with a resolution. The power of his mind is stamped on every line that he wrote. Hazlitt says, "the fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contra-

dictory materials. On reading his works, we feel ourselves under the influence of a mighty intellect, that the nearer it approaches others it becomes more distant from them. The quantity of art in him shows the strength of his genius, the weight of his intellectual obligations would have oppressed any other writer. Milton was a true artist. He always strove hard to say the finest things in the world, and he did say them. He adorned and dignified his subject to the utmost, he surrounded it with every possible association of beauty or grandeur, whether mortal, intellectual or physical. He refined his description of beauty, 'loading sweet on sweets till the sense craves at them and raises its image'. Let us take, for example, his 'Lycidas'. Lycidas says Saintsbury, "remains the poem of a refined hum

artist, an example of supreme perfection of style, imagery and versification. No English poem exhibits a more exquisite harmony and variety of number or a more extraordinary science of rhythm, while very few of anything like the same length have a greater number of single phrases, memorable for thought, music or both."

"Paradise Lost" is the creation of a great artist. "Only an artist with a sublime conception of art, could have composed such a mighty piece of art," says MacWatson. "It is, undoubtedly, the most masterly written master-piece of a creative artist," says Herles. It is good and dignified, both in subject and style. In setting himself down to compose 'Paradise Lost' Milton regarded himself not as an author, but as a medium the mouthpiece of that 'Eternal Spirit, who

enriched with all utterances and all knowledge! Urania heavenly muse visited him.

"And dictated to me slumbering or inspired, easy my unpremeditated verse"

Milton's creative artistic genius is best exhibited in his sonnets. These are, in the nature of occasional outbursts of his poetic energy inspired by political and religious upheavals of the stormy Age, he lived in. In all his sonnets there is not a proposition of which the meaning is doubtful or the construction intricate.

"His sonnet, being based upon what is common and simple, aims at the highest and the noblest."

Milton, of course, never tried to identify himself as a philosopher, he always considered himself as a servant of God and a friend of man. But, unconsciously, out of his art

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reformatory and didactic there sprang up a good deal of philosophy. The central philosophic element in Milton's poetic art is the identification of man's heightened soul with the Divine Will. This philosophic doctrine pervades his master-piece 'Paradise Lost'.

The life of every man in this world is the story of 'Paradise Lost' and 'Sought', and that man's ultimate elevation and perfection is possible only when he tries to make himself spiritually identical with the soul of all souls, by following the path of Justice, Righteousness, Goodness and Mercy.

The end.

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