

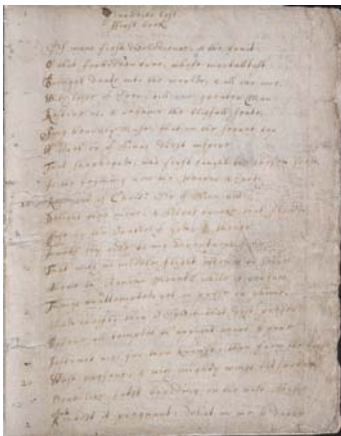
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John Milton's *Paradise Lost* at The Morgan Library & Museum
Exhibition Features Only Surviving Original Manuscript
of Book 1 of Milton's Masterpiece

October 7, 2008, through January 4, 2009

New York, NY, September 24, 2008—To celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the English poet John Milton (1608–1674), The Morgan Library & Museum presents the only surviving manuscript of Milton's masterpiece *Paradise Lost*, Book 1 from October 7, 2008, through January 4, 2009 in the Clare Eddy Thaw Gallery.



John Milton, *Paradise Lost*. Manuscript of Book 1, in the hand of an amanuensis, corrected at Milton's direction, ca. 1665. Purchased by Pierpont Morgan, 1904, The Morgan Library & Museum; MA 307.

Acquired by Pierpont Morgan in 1904, *Paradise Lost*, Book 1 is the most important British literary manuscript in the Morgan's collections. The thirty-three page manuscript has been temporarily disbound for conservation and digitization, providing the public with an unprecedented and unique opportunity to view eight of its original pages, the most that have ever been exhibited at one time.

In addition, first editions of *Paradise Lost* printed in England and the United States during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are on view as well as a handsomely bound copy of the book from the library of King Charles II of England (1630–1685). A rarely seen miniature portrait of Milton is also exhibited.

“The manuscript of *Paradise Lost* is one of the iconic works in the Morgan's collections and a touchstone of Western civilization,” said William M. Griswold, director of the Morgan. “Milton intended his poem to be an epic in English modeled upon the great classical poems such as the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. To see *Paradise Lost* in its original form, to read the unforgettable opening lines that lay out the subject of the entire poem, is truly inspiring.”

Paradise Lost was first issued anonymously, the title page bearing only the initials “J. M.” It is likely that the printer Samuel Simmons decided against using Milton’s full name on the title page because of Milton’s support of regicide; he defended the execution of Charles I. Milton continued to be regarded as a dangerous radical when *Paradise Lost* was first published.

Also on display is the first edition from the library of Charles II. In 1660, Charles II, the son of Charles I, was restored to the English throne. The king issued a proclamation calling for two of Milton’s books to be publicly burned. Milton was imprisoned and forced to pay a large sum to obtain his freedom.



Miniature of an unknown man (John Milton?), anonymous, British School, 17th century, watercolor on vellum. Gift of J. P. Morgan, Jr. The Morgan Library & Museum; AZ099.

A miniature portrait of a middle-aged man is believed to depict John Milton at the age of forty-eight. This may have been given by Milton to his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, whom he married in November 1656. The miniature was bequeathed to Woodcock’s niece and was handed down in direct succession through the Woodcock family.

Among the other treasures on view is an extremely rare 1777 edition of *Paradise Lost* published by Philadelphia printer Robert Bell, who more than a century after the first publication of *Paradise Lost* in London, ignored British copyright to publish the work for the first time in the United States.

JOHN MILTON AND *PARADISE LOST*

John Milton was born in London on December 9, 1608. During the politically turbulent decade of the 1640s, Milton wrote a series of pamphlets in defense of political, religious, and civil liberty, becoming the foremost polemicist of his day. He published his first collection of poems in 1646 but wrote no more poetry until he began composing *Paradise Lost*.

In 1649, following the execution of Charles I, Milton was appointed secretary for foreign tongues, similar to the position of secretary of state, for the Commonwealth, England’s republican government from 1649 to 1660. For the next ten years, he was the chief propagandist for Oliver Cromwell’s regime as lord protector and the lightning rod for European reaction to the execution of the king.

Milton composed the ten books of *Paradise Lost* between 1658 and 1663. He had first planned the work as early as 1640, intending to write a tragedy titled *Adam Unparadised*. By 1652 he had become completely blind, probably due to glaucoma. Blindness forced him to compose orally, rendering him entirely reliant upon several amanuenses (casual copyists among his friends and family) to whom he dictated. He composed the poem mostly at night or in the early morning, committing his composition to memory until someone

was available to write down his words. He revised as his text was read back to him, so that a day's work amounted to twenty lines of verse.

The only surviving manuscript of *Paradise Lost* is Book 1 written in secretary script by a professional scribe who probably transcribed patchwork pages of text Milton had dictated to various amanuenses. The copy was corrected by at least five different hands under Milton's personal direction and used by the printer to set the type for the first edition of the book.

The Licensing Act, which was suspended during Cromwell's term as Lord Protector, was renewed in 1662. Printers and publishers therefore required a license in order to legally print and distribute any book. Printing was authorized only when an imprimatur (Latin for "let it be printed") was granted by the Stationers' Company. The imprimatur for the *Paradise Lost* manuscript is inscribed on the inside cover. Soiled with ink smudges and compositors' marks, printer's copy manuscripts were customarily discarded or recycled after printing. The rare presence of the imprimatur may account for the survival of the Morgan's manuscript.

Milton sold the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* and the right to publish the poem to the printer Samuel Simmons for £5. The contract is dated April 27, 1667, and the book was published in late October or early November 1667. Although Milton had completed *Paradise Lost* by 1665, publication was delayed by a paper shortage caused by the Second Anglo-Dutch War, the Great Plague, and the Great Fire of London in 1666, which destroyed many of the city's presses. The absence of Simmons's name on the earliest title pages indicates that he may have been unable to print the book himself. The issues of 1668 and 1669 that do bear Simmons's name do not give an address, suggesting that the first edition was assigned to another printer, Peter Parker. Approximately 1,300 copies of the first edition were printed, issued with no fewer than six different title pages. Marketed at three shillings a copy, the first printing was sold out within eighteen months.

John Milton's Paradise Lost is organized by Declan Kiely, Robert H. Taylor Curator of Literary and Historical Manuscripts, The Morgan Library & Museum.

This exhibition is made possible through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Rudy L. Ruggles, Jr.



This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

To coincide with the exhibition, Gordon Campbell, an eminent Milton scholar will discuss his forthcoming biography of Milton on Thursday, November 13, 2008.

The Morgan's online exhibition also features an audio component: a recording of the first twenty-six lines of *Paradise Lost* (known as the Invocation to the Muse—arguably the most famous lines in English poetry), and Milton's Sonnet 22, read by Tony-award winning actor Mark Rylance.

For this program and other information, please contact the Education department at (212) 590-0333.

THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, musical venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Morgan Library & Museum
225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405
212.685.0008
www.themorgan.org

HOURS

Tuesday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; extended Friday hours, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed Monday, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. The Morgan closes at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

ADMISSION

\$12 for adults; \$8 for students, seniors (65 and over), and children (under 16); free to Members and children, 12 and under accompanied by an adult. Admission is free on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission is not required to visit the Morgan Shop.

CURRENT AND UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

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| <i>Three Gutenberg Bibles</i> | Through September 28, 2008 |
| <i>Liszt in Paris: Enduring Encounters</i> | Through November 16, 2008 |
| <i>Drawing Babar: Early Drafts and Watercolors</i> | Through January 4, 2009 |
| <i>Protecting the Word: Book Bindings of the Morgan</i> | December 5, 2008, through March 29, 2009 |
| <i>The Thaw Collection of Master Drawings</i> | January 23 through May 3, 2009 |
| <i>On the Money: Cartoons for The New Yorker</i> | January 23 through May 24, 2009 |
| <i>Studying Nature: Oil Sketches from the Thaw Collection</i> | January 23 through May 3, 2009 |