

# *Paradise Lost: Modes, Kinds, Conventions*

Courtesy of Prof. Harold Toliver of UC Irvine

## I. Modes

Lyric: aubade, epithalamion, monodic and choric hymn, prayer, even song, orison, elegy (*apobaterion*), ode, proem, invocation, love sonnet, creation songs and hymns (Books 7-8)

Dramatic: dialogue and dialectic, debate, soliloquy, apostrophe

Narrative: autobiography, chronicle, apocalyptic, prophetic, typological

Descriptive: heroic, romantic, pastoral, etc.; encyclopedic (*hexaemeral*)

Rhetoric: forensic (judicial), deliberative (advisory), epideictic (ceremonial)

## II. Kinds

allegory, tragedy, comedy, satire and parody, heroic, pastoral, georgic, romance

# *Epic Form and Conventions*

Courtesy of Prof. Richard F.W. Kroll of UC Irvine

***Epic Form and Conventions***: Form -- “The epic is a long narrative poem involving heroic figures in the performance of heroic deeds, usually extended over a wide geographical area; it is written in a heroic or grandiose manner” (Norton and Rushton). The epic is “a long narrative poem presenting characters of high position in a series of adventures which form an organic whole through their relation to a central figure of heroic proportions and through their development of episodes important to the development of a nation or race” (Thrall and Hibbard).

### Major Conventions:

1. Hero: a mythical or historical figure, usually national.
2. Subject matter: heroic deeds, battles, long journeys.
3. Verse: elevated, lofty, “heroic”; the best known device is *epic simile*--see PL I.331-343, 351-355, 761-798.
4. Action: an intermixture of supernatural elements or figures with human characters.
5. Place: world-wide, even cosmic, scale.
6. Comic, not tragic: the hero is successful in his exploits.
7. Objective poet: but consider the “Miltonic aside,” as in PL II.496-505.

### Minor Conventions:

1. Invocation to the muse: PL I.1-26 and elsewhere.
2. Epic statement: PL I.1-5.
3. Epic question: PL I.28-33.
4. Epic answer: PL I.34-39.
5. *in medias res*: the poem doesn’t start with the larger back-story but rather plunges “into the middle of things.”
6. Narrative of events that transpired before the beginning of the poem; the “flashback.”
7. Catalogs or long processions of characters, places, or things: Iliad 2.494-759, PL I.376-505.
8. Set or formal speeches of the sort you also find in ancient history texts like those of Herodotus and Thucydides.
9. Continuous verse form.

### Miltonic Conventions:

1. Miltonic inversions (“he seemed for dignity composed, and high exploit”).
2. Omission of words (“And [we] regain the blissful seat”).
3. Parentheses, appositions: PL I.34-44; II.552-54.
4. Use of one part of speech for another (“The great consult [i.e. a verb has replaced “consultation”] began”).
5. Latinizing of diction: *expatiate*, *justify*.
6. Miltonic vagueness: PL II.666-73, 1048.
7. Avoidance of simple sentences.
8. Allusions: PL I.573-97.