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## Analytical Study of Milton's *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro* and *Li Penseroso*

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### ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with one of the greatest poets of all time, John Milton, who as a poet has written some amazing pieces of work that are immortal in the history of English Literature. Here we would like to discuss three of his greatest poems namely *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro* and *Li Penseroso* in order to analyse his greatness as a poet. His poetic genius is at its best when we talk about these three poems, of course, *Paradise Lost* is another story. *Lycidas* by Milton is highly popular elegy written on the death of his friend Edward King. On the other hand *L'Allegro* and *Li Penseroso* are companion poems written with a specific purpose. So, let us try to discuss them in detail to get the output that we require.

**Keywords:** *Elegy, Pastoral, Companion Poems, Nature, Symbolism.*

Milton is considered as one of the most famous poets in the history of English Literature and rightly so his works are above par excellence in terms of poetic elements and language which he uses sharply in whatever work he writes. His *Paradise Lost* is well-known throughout the world and has not required any introduction for this matter. However, here we would like to discuss three of his greatest poems namely *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro* and *LiPenseroso* in order to describe the elements that make Milton an excellent poet to read and to enjoy as a reader.

*Lycidas* by Milton is highly popular elegy. The poem is 193 lines in length, and is irregularly rhymed. While many of the other poems in the collection are in Greek and Latin, *Lycidas* is one of the poems written in English. Milton republished the poem in 1645.

### History of the name *Lycidas*

According to in one of his books, there was an Athenian councilor named *Lycidas* who suggested to his countrymen to let convinced to the proposal given by their enemy, Persian King Xerxes I. The war was going on and he wanted it to be stopped but people took it in different manner and considered him as one of the conspirators, thus, he was eventually

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stoned by them to death. Thus, his end was tragic and thus Milton had used this name to mention his friend's tragic death.

The poem talks about the sudden death of his friend King Edward by naming him Lycidas. He, here, tries to recreate the tradition of ancient Greek to give name of any tragic character to the concerned one. Further, the poet gives so many references about the nature, environment, different angels, flowers and the memories of the moments that he shared with his friend when they were together.

They both were very happy but then comes a 'heavy change' by the death of Lycidas and that now he had gone is just like a 'pathetic fallacy' in which "woods, and caves are also lamenting the death of Lycidas." Then he mourns the fact that, all the thoughts of Lycidas might have been saved are worthless because nothing could be done now. This segment is then followed by a disruption in the swain's monologue in the voice of Phoebus, "the sun-god, drawn from Roman poetry", [who] responds that, "fame is not mortal but eternal, witnessed by Jove (God) himself on judgment day."

At the end of the poem, King Lycidas emerges in a renewed shape, being transported, by Christ, from the waters that lead to his death, "Burnished by the sun's rays at dawn, King resplendently ascends heavenward to his eternal reward."

However, the poem shifts gears at the end, suggesting that Lycidas is not really dead, because he has been reborn in Heaven, where all the saints entertain him. Things are looking up, "Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new"

### **Genuine Grief expressed**

Dr. Jonson wrote about Lycidas that it is not to be considered as 'the effusion of real passion' as Milton did not have very intimate relation with Edward. But even then the death of one devoted to the church was a matter of utmost grief to Milton. So he had to break his long silence of four years after writing *Camus*. It was, of course, 'bitter constraint and sad occasion' which forced him to express his heart-felt grief.

### **The poem has the dignity and solemnity of an elegy**

An elegy remembers the death, and death is a very serious and solemn subject. *Lycidas* has the dignity and solemnity of an elegy. There is the charm of the muse. Even when the poet describes the variety of flowers, the gravity of the situation is not lost because the poet does not let us forget that they are for the coffin of Lycidas. Though the poem ends with a note of understanding, it retains its gravity and solemnity.

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On the contrary *L'Allegro* and *LiPenseroso* are the poems that can be read together in order to get the correct meaning. If we read them separately we will never get the idea that is prescribed by the poet. They are companion poems and thus Milton himself has stated that, "*L'Allegro* and *LiPenseroso* are companion poems and should be read together". According to Stopford A. Brooke,

Both poems are full of natural descriptions but it is neither the description which imposes one's own feeling on nature, nor the moralizing description which in Shelley and Wordsworth was built on the thought that nature was alive and man's companion. It is the pure description of things seen, seen not necessarily through the poet's own mood, but always in direct relation to man and to the special mood of man's mind which Milton has chosen as the groundwork for each poem.

### Comparison Between two Poems

1. There is similarity in the plan of construction in both the poems.
2. Both are natural as well as pastoral poems.
3. There is personification in both poems.
4. The beginning and ending are similar.
5. Both describe pleasure either of mirth or of melancholy.

### Contrast Between two poems

1. Both poems depict life from two different aspects. *L'Allegro* depicts the pleasure of a mirthful thoughtful man, while *Li Penseroso* describes the pleasures of a thoughtful meditative man. *L'Allegro* hates melancholy while *Li Penseroso* hates mirth.
2. *L'Allegro* wakes up with the laugh in the morning while *Li Penseroso* day begins at night; his pleasures begin when he studies astronomy, philosophy and poetry; his pleasures are only intellectual.
3. *L'Allegro* is attracted to the joyous sound of lark, cock, the hounds, and horns whereas *Li Penseroso* is attracted to the sad sweet sounds of nightingale's song.
4. *L'Allegro* takes pleasure in music, dancing, village festivals, fairy tales, tournaments, masques, pageants, and witnessing comic plays on the stage. However, *Li Penseroso* takes pleasure in study and meditation.
5. *L'Allegro* likes company and is sociable while *Li Penseroso* loves solitude and seclusion. As contrast or as complementary, they both are the same companion poems and should be read together.

### Opinions of Different critics

#### Alan Rudrum believes,

Close comparison makes it very clear that *L'Allegro* and *Li Penseroso* were intended as companion pieces. In detail as well as in overall structure they correspond closely

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to one another. The very close relationship between the poems in itself raises problems, but makes the point very clear that we cannot fully appreciate each poem in isolation

**For E.M.V.Tillyard,**

*L'Allegro* and *Li Penseroso* are the most finished products of what I have called Milton's early poetic maturity. They have been praised lavishly and justly and they have probably pleased more readers than anything else Milton wrote

### CONCLUSION

We may say that both these poems cannot be read in isolation as both these poems are inevitably united with each other. However, both these poems were and in fact are the immortal pieces of poetic beauty.

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