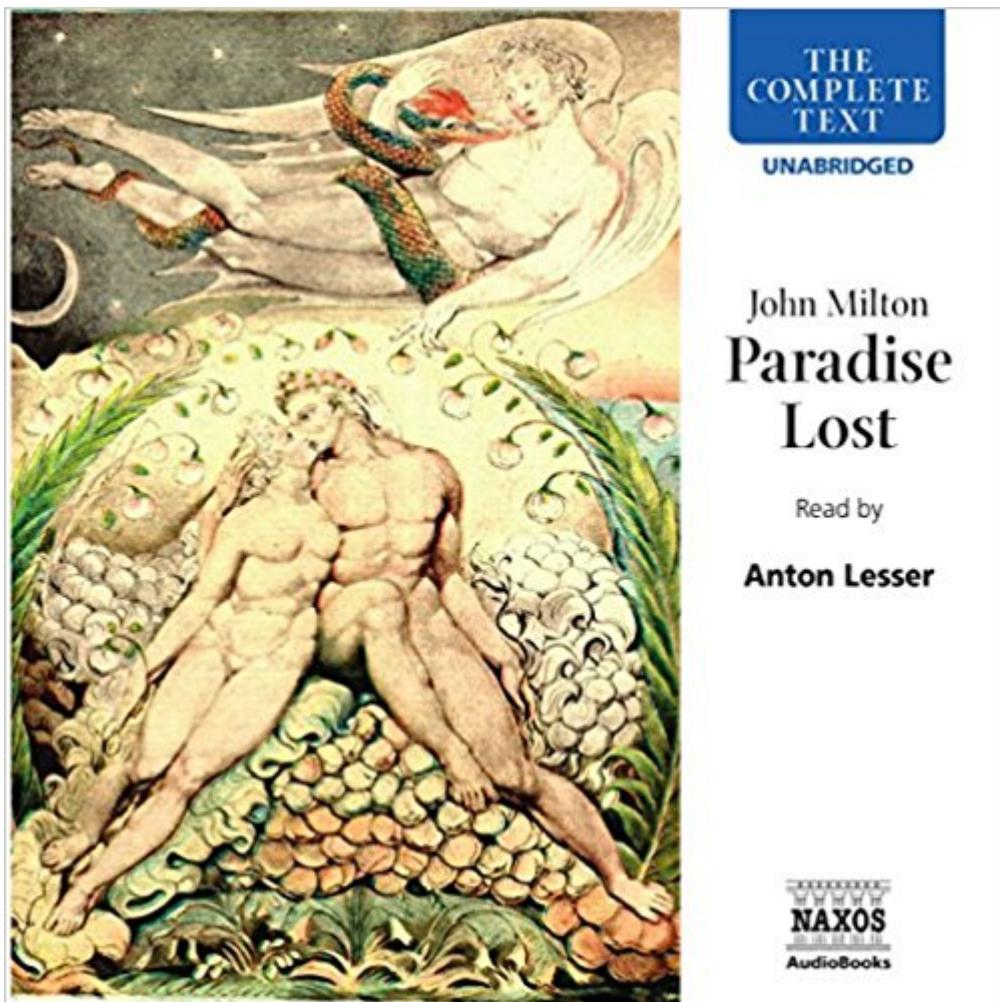


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Paradise Lost (Naxos AudioBooks)



Synopsis

'Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste Brought Death into the World, and all our woe...' So begins the greatest epic poem in the English language. In words remarkable for their richness of rhythm and imagery, Milton tells the story of man's creation, fall and redemption - 'to justify the ways of God to men.' Here, unabridged, and told with exceptional sensitivity and power by Anton Lesser, is the plight of Adam and Eve, the ambition and vengefulness of Satan and his cohorts.

Book Information

Audio CD

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Customer Reviews

One could hardly hope for a more intelligent reading of Milton's epic poem, relating Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve and their fall. Anton Lesser's clarity, expressiveness, and careful weighting of each phrase deserve high praise. The dialogue comes across like Shakespearean drama, and while Lesser doesn't vary his voice much, he strikes the right note for each character. In Satan's soliloquies, when he whispers, Lesser's reading is thrilling; but when he thunders, his somewhat thin tenor makes him sound querulous rather than grand, so where we expect tympani, we get a snare drum. Still, Lesser provides so much else it seems small-minded to cavil at this flaw. He makes Milton exciting. W.M. © AudioFile 2006, Portland, Maine-- Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine

A person considering buying a recording of *Paradise Lost* might have two questions. First, Am I going to be able to follow the poem without notes and guidance? Second, should I buy the complete

version or the abridged one? Paradise Lost is a notoriously difficult text, full of learned references to mythology, history, and geography; the language is dense, the syntax twisted, the sense frequently obscure; and the poem is just plain long. Perhaps surprisingly, Anton Lesser's reading makes it possible to ride over all these difficulties; his intelligent and varied readings make the sense clear even when the language isn't. One hears the infinite variety of the poem, the delicate and touching parts as well as the stirring and sublime, the innocence of Paradise and the magnificent evil of Satan. I've read Paradise Lost perhaps half a dozen times over the years, always with notes; this is the first time I was sorry to reach the end of it. But what about the abridged version? I don't recommend it; Milton builds up his climaxes on a vast scale, and a "great moments from Milton" approach weakens their effect. Also, on the abridged version, Eve is read by an actress. This seems to me a mistake; Paradise Lost is full of voices -- Satan and all the demonic throng, the allegorical figures of Sin and Death (Sin is also a woman), God, the Messiah, the angelic host, Adam and Eve -- and to single out one of the voices is to falsely highlight and distort. (Plus, the part is read with an odd accent, almost Irish; what is that about?) It must be granted that all of Lesser's skill can't make God Himself more than a cold and distant abstraction. But that is what Milton wrote, and probably what he intended. So, my recommendation is to spend the extra and get the complete set. It's something you wouldn't want to miss!

Somehow, I never read this epic poem in school. I enjoyed it. The artist doing the reading is British and his accent seems to suit the material. His delivery is very good. He "acts" the lines of each of the characters rather than just reading them. Each chapter of the poem is preceded by a short synopsis which helps if you are not familiar with the work. The work had some surprises in it for me. For instance, it's down right scary in some places. Satan, at times, seems reluctant to destroy such beautiful creation. Initially, the battle in Heaven between good and evil takes the form of a clash of armies armed with swords and shields. I was not expecting this treatment. If you don't like listening to Shakespeare's plays on CD, you probably will not like this poem either. It is written in similar medieval style.

Mark Twain remarked that "a classic" is a book that people praise, but don't read. Prior to listening to this unabridged audio version, I was only dimly aware of PARADISE LOST. I knew it was an epic poem about Satan's fall from grace, and knew that it was quoted in the Star Trek episode "Space Seed." ("It is better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven.") British thespian Anton Lesser brings the saga dramatically to life. It is a delight to hear a great actor speak great verse and tell an epic

tale. You still have to pay close attention to the proceedings. Multitasking throughout will leave you baffled and doing much rewinding. This is not for those with short attention spans. Focus is required, but you will be rewarded. For those who revel in marvelous spoken word performances, this is highly recommended.

This is the whole text of *Paradise Lost*, including the 'Arguments' heading each book, read by an accomplished actor able to convey character and attitude as well as maintain Milton's rhythmic thrust. I have sampled all the other recordings; as I recall there was only one other, currently available, which was of the entire text, and it was nowhere near as good. Having the text on CD (or iPod) makes it possible to hear when you are not in a position to read--I often listen lying quasi-insomniac in bed. I personally am more interested in Blake than in Milton, but because Milton was a crucial influence on Blake and the subject of one of his major prophecies, I was delighted to find this recording. I would not have had the time or focus to read or re-read the text in the midst of my numerous other readings. Now if only there were comparable readings of Blake's prophecies! (I'm working on doing that myself.)

A superb recording. I appreciate the change to order it.

For many people this book can be a daunting task to read (myself included). Reading along with this audio has helped me tremendously. It is very well done and follows the text perfectly. I recommend reading along with it. I've tried just listening and I find my mind wanders a bit.

He has a great a great voice and wonderful feeling for the story and the writer to to bring this text alive.

Well read. Easy to listen to.

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