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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Comparison of the Characters of Samson and Dalila in John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and *King James Bible*

Porovnání hlavních postav Samsona a Dalily v *Samson Agonistes* od Johna Milтона s hlavními postavami Samsona a Delily v *Bibli Krále Jakuba*

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ABSTRAKT

Cílem této práce je pozastavit se nad básnickým dílem: *Samson Agonistes* napsaným Johnem Miltonem a důkladně porovnat postavy Samsona a Dalily spolu s původní, biblickou, verzí, která se nachází ve Starém zákoně, konkrétně v knize Soudců, kapitoly 13.-16. Tato práce nezkoumá pouze rozdíly, ale poukazuje také na podobnosti postav, které se na první pohled mohou jevit protikladnými.

Jedním z hlavních prostředků analýzy tohoto textu je juxtapozice a rozbor díla: *Samson Agonistes* od Johna Milтона, a biblických textů, vycházejících z klasického anglického překladu: *Authorized King James Bible* .

První část práce se zabývá postavou Samsona jako hrdiny, který byl obdařen obrovskou silou, jak je napsáno v Bibli a Samsonem podle Johna Milтона, který je slepý, sklíčený a uvězněný Pelištejci. Milton zde reflektuje své niterní pocity, díky čemuž se toto poetické dílo považuje za autobiografické. V další části je pozornost zaměřena na biblickou Dalilu, podvodnici, a Dalilu Johna Milтона, která se jeví, že si ve svých promluvách protirečí. Poslední část zkoumá, v čem si jsou Samson a Dalila podobní.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Samson Agonistes, John Milton, Porovnání hlavních postav, Bible krále Jakuba, Dalila

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to explore John Milton's poetic work *Samson Agonistes* through a thorough comparison between the characters of Samson and Dalila, while also contrasting them with the original, biblical, Samson and Delilah, in the Old Testament, *the Book of Judges*, chapters 13-16. The thesis does not explore only differences but also similarities of these seemingly contrasting characters.

The main tools used to conduct this analysis are juxtaposition and close reading of John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and biblical texts, using the *Authorized King James Bible*.

The first part of this thesis is discussing the heroic character of Samson possessing divine powers as depicted in the Bible and John Milton's Samson who is blind, distraught and held captive by the Philistines. Milton is reflecting his own innermost feelings in *Samson Agonistes* making this poetic work autobiographical. The next part focuses on the deceitful biblical Delilah and John Milton's Dalila who seems to contradict herself in her manner of speaking. The last part of the thesis examines Samson and Dalila's similarities.

KEYWORDS

Samson Agonistes, John Milton, Character comparison, King James Bible, Dalila

Obsah:

Theoretical Part:	7
1. Historical Context of the Book of Judges	7
2. Historical Context of Samson Agonistes	9
2.1. Political Situation in England During mid 17th century	9
2.2. The Creation of Samson Agonistes	13
Practical Part	16
1. The Structural Differences between Biblical Samson and Samson Agonistes	16
2. The Differences between the Characters of Biblical Samson and Miltonic Samson	20
2.1. The Appearance	20
2.2. The Personality	21
3. The Differences between the Characters of Delilah and Dalila	27
3.1. The Differences Concerning the Origin of the Names	27
3.2. The Differences Concerning the Character Psychology between Dalila and Delilah and the Alterations to the Plot	28
4. Similarities between Samson and Dalila	31
5. Conclusion	33

Theoretical Part:

1. Historical Context of *the Book of Judges*

The Book of Judges belongs to the Old Testament and as the title suggests itself it is a book about twelve judges¹ who were trying to set Israel free from the Mesopotamites, the Moabites, the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Midianites and the Ammonites and the 325 years of their oppressive power (Vallotton, Annie., 2012). These judges were either military leaders, warriors or prophets. *The Book of Judges* does not follow chronological order. It describes the time of the elders who survived Joshua and concludes with Eli and Samuel. Samuel also appears in *the Book of Samuel* and describes the drawbacks of the governance of the judges. According to Marc Zvi Brettler (2009), an American biblical scholar, the main purpose of *the Book of Judges* was not to record the Israel's history but to draw moral lessons from the stories.

There exist two theories as to who was the author of *the Book of Judges*. The first theory claims that *the Book of Judges* was written and edited by Deuteronomistic editors in the late 7th or 6th century before common era. The book was allegedly written long after the described events took place (Brettler, Marc Zvi, et al., 2009).

The second theory to which many theologians seem to incline states that author of *the Book of Judges* is allegedly Samuel. Samuel was one of the most famous Israelite prophets of his time and also the last judge of Israel in the 11th century before common era. He was also a judge, writer and a priest. Samuel played a crucial role in the premonarchic period as well as during the time of the establishment of the monarchy. He was chosen by God to be the counselor of the kings of Israel. Singer Itamar (2006) and Garciel Moshe (2009) claim that Samuel was born in the year of 1070 and that he died in 1020's before common era, other sources claim that he was born around 1105 and died in 1039 (MacArthur, John. 2016).

As far as the precise date that marks Samson's story is concerned the exact date also differs. The dates that are mentioned the most often among biblical specialists are the years: 1075 to 1055 before common era as these years are allegedly the birth and the death of

¹ judges were not the judges we are familiar with nowadays. These judges were leaders who ruled in order to provide justice for their people.

Samson himself (Vallotton, Annie., 2012). Interestingly, Samson's story compared to the other judges is the longest and stretches over four chapters which describe the life of Samson and mark the first civil war in Israel. Compared to the other judges, Samson fought individually, without any army with God by his side.

2. Historical Context of *Samson Agonistes*

John Milton is classified as an author of the seventeenth century in England. This subchapter discusses the political situation and John Milton's role in the seventeenth century in England.

2.1. Political Situation in England During mid 17th century

The years of 1640 to 1649 were a period of great unrest because of the tensions between the current king of England Charles I and the Parliament, the Catholics and the Protestants.

King Charles I married princess Henrietta Maria of France. This marriage infused social unrest and mistrust among the Protestant population because Henrietta Maria was Catholic and people believed that the king would be under constant Catholic influence of his wife and therefore he would eventually favor or even enforce Catholicism on his people. Gradually the feared Catholic influence started to emerge. The king Charles I began to transform the Church of England by interior alterations in the churches. He also altered some religious ceremonies which Puritans considered as Catholicizing of the Anglican church. The Puritans responded by complaining and not attending the services, which was met with hostility² on the part of the king Charles I (Lachmann, Richard., 1989).

During 1640s the king, Charles I, lost his authority due to numerous attempts to collect money from the gentry and his poor financial strategies which caused England to reach the state's credit limit incredibly early. The crown grew more and more dependent on the aristocracy. At the beginning of his reign³, Charles I collected taxes for military purposes and to reinforce naval military equipment, which was endorsed by the gentry. However, when the king Charles I wanted to collect taxes for other, personal, purposes the aristocracy rejected his attempts. It became obvious, that the roles shifted because the crown did not have any other sources of income. According to H. R. Trevor-Roper and Lawrence Stone (1960), the English Civil War was a dispute between a self-centered court and people on whom the King imposed taxes (Charlesworth, Andrew., 1983).

² Puritans were penalized and imprisoned

³ around 1634 to 1639

... in England, as I show below, the crown purged most clerics and many magnates from Parliament. Parliament therefore shifted from being an assembly of men with national power⁴ to a congress representing local interests, which, as they found common bases of unity, became a new opposition to English horizontal absolutism. (Lachmann, Richard., 1989).

Joseph George Muddiman (1928) claims that Charles I was convinced that being a King meant that he could not be challenged by any other jurisdiction on earth⁵ and as Davies Godfrey (1959) asserts, he continued his reign in the same spirit of “the divine right”⁶, as his father James I, with the thought of unification of Britain, Ireland and Scotland on his mind . That is one of the main reasons why his reign was considered to be leaning towards absolutism⁷. However, as well as his father James I, he failed to realize the needs of his era. The need to reach an agreement within the Commons and the Puritans, whom H. R. Trevor-Roper (1960) considered to be the embodiment of the opposition to the court that evinced signs of renaissant reign.

In order to enforce his power and secure his position his absolutist demeanor escalated with his decision to dissolve the Parliament, when the Parliament raised objections to his reign. However, it was only momentary and the King had to assemble the Parliament again due to extreme financial distress at the court (Davies, Godfrey., 1959).

The issue was clearly drawn, it was the authority of the Parliament and the rights and the liberties of the subjects against the King’s unlimited prerogative supported by his subservient churchmen; and at stakes were the peace, prosperity and freedom, or as the commons said: the apparent ruin and destruction of this Kingdom.... (Whiting G. W.,1953).

⁴ the Parliament had power to raise taxes.

⁵ his father, King James I. shared the same attitude

⁶King’s unlimited power and control over everything

⁷ some sources state that his attempt to lean towards absolutism was inspired by his attempts to frenchify the court because of his wife’s French origin.

When the King proved unwilling to compromise and modify his reign in order to establish peaceful atmosphere among the government, the situation resulted in the English Civil War, a religious revolution which brought moral values of classical republicanism to England, starting in 1642, where Parliamentarists fought against Royalists which escalated in regicide in 1649. Milton defended this act as it was well-deserved and acted out lawfully (Dietz, Frederick., 1964).

When the King was beheaded, the leader of Parliamentarian party, Oliver Cromwell, replaced monarchy by the English Council of State of the Commonwealth, later called Protectorate, during which England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland were united and governed as one. Oliver Cromwell, appointed as a Lord Protector, became the ruler of the Protectorate in 1653 till his death in 1658 (The Editors of Britannica, 2018).

John Milton worked as Cromwell's Latin Secretary, which meant his duty was to translate various political texts into Latin. He also worked as a diplomatic figure and he issued texts supporting the Protectorate. Eventually because of excessive writing for Cromwell, he lost his eyesight.

The primary aim of the Commonwealth was to create a system which would be promoting public interests and which would oppose to the previous political system, tyrannic monarchy. Milton had high hopes for Cromwell as he viewed him as the chosen one by God and believed that only he was able to create the system that the Commonwealth was established for.

...The King of England governs his people not by the power of an absolute king but by that of a civil government, for the people is ruled by those laws which they have themselves passed. (Milton, John., 1651).

As far as the religion is concerned, the Protectorate was experimenting with religious liberty because Cromwell believed that no single church as an institution should possess the universal control over the notion of truth, in terms of beliefs, and over what should be acceptable and what should not. At the beginning of Cromwell's rule, Milton wrote a sonnet addressed to Oliver Cromwell in hopes that he would shift his focus from the military⁸ sphere

⁸ Cromwell established quite a powerful military during the Civil War. However, the armed conflicts, which he led, did not end with the the Civil War.

to the civil with the goal of establishing peace and stability. Milton wanted Cromwell to keep his eyes on the main objective, which was establishing a new national church and the idea that England would be the new Israel (The Editors of Britannica, 2018). Cromwell, as well as Milton, was convinced that there should exist a national church which would branch into sub-churches not confined to a certain way of worshipping but to every sub-church would be assigned clergy well-acquainted with Bible with a license from the state. However, he did not accept those whose religion rejected the Holy Trinity, approved of or performed sexual misconduct or other liberties. Although Cromwell loathed Catholicism, which quite disrupted his notion of religious tolerance, the Catholics were moderately oppressed when found exercising their own beliefs in private, which was extraordinary in that era (Tulloch, John., 2016).

In terms of the Parliament, a group of those who supported the Crown, royalists, emerged again but shortly after they met with Cromwell's raised taxes. Cromwell imposed extra taxation on those who were fighting on the side of the Crown during Civil War. Some had to undergo a procedure of "puritanization", meaning that strict puritan codes were imposed on people against their will. Commissions were formed to look into legal reform and the issue of tithes, prohibition of profanities, intoxication, and consequently any theatrical performances were banned. At this point it was more than evident that Cromwell ruled on his own in the manner which was similar to the previous rule (The Editors of Britannica, 2018).

After Cromwell's death in September 1658 the Protectorate did not last for long. Richard Cromwell, his successor and son, after proving unfavourable in his ruling for eight months assisted in the collapse of the Protectorate in 1659. The Parliament had to restore the monarchy and appoint King Charles' I son, Charles II, who stayed in exile, as the King. During 1659 Milton in his *Letter to a Friend Concerning the Ruptures of the Commonwealth Publish'd from the Manuscript* still tried to convince the Parliament that the country should be lead with two principles in mind which are: religious tolerance, except for Catholicism, and rejection of only one person as a head of the state ruling on its own. One can assume that he was deeply against the idea of a king but also any kind of protector, which might imply that he was disappointed by Oliver Cromwell's final years of ruling (Milton, John, & Mitford, John., 1863).

When the Monarchy was restored, Milton was in a desolate state. He spent over a decade fighting against tyranny only for it to be restored again. Even though he managed to escape his punishment in the form of a death penalty due to his political engagement in the Protectorate and his tight ties to Cromwell his writings were burned down completely (Wolfe, Don M., 1936).

Milton had difficulties writing any texts which would claim that absolutist monarchy and Christianity go hand in hand, since up to this point he used to rely on the ideas of Aristotle and the Old Testament which supported rather the whole idea of Commonwealth than monarchy. He started working on *Paradise Lost* and his political views did not change but remained the same as during Cromwell's reign. In the last years of his life, he remained active in terms of writing and in 1674 he passed away (Tulloch, John., 2016).

2.2. The Creation of *Samson Agonistes*

Professor John Rogers (2007) claims that there exist three main theories as to when Milton wrote the poem of *Samson Agonistes*. The first one, which most people seem to agree with, is that *Samson Agonistes* is Milton's final poetic work meaning that it must have been written in late, or even after, 1660s during the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. This theory takes into account Milton's blindness as well as the historical background, his role and political engagement during the revolution and considers the poem as a mirror to his own life. Samson being the leading figure and taking part in the revolution of Israelites complements Milton's role during the revolution. The reader can detect a sense of poignant frustration with the result of the political situation expressed in the poem. This was the main reason why a great number of academics consider this as the last work of John Milton.

The next theory states that Milton must have composed the poem in 1640s as a reaction to him becoming blind. Those who adhere to this theory use as evidence the fact that the descriptions of Samson's feelings are very strong and intimate that he must have written the poem before writing *Paradise Lost* (Rogers, John., 2007).

The last theory claims that the poem was composed at the beginning of 1640s. The focus of this theory is Milton's partnership with Mary Powell. It is said that she left him only after a few weeks of marriage meaning that *Samson Agonistes* is not only a political poem but also a

private one because the character of Dalila is regarded as an essential element to the plot line and not a secondary one as the other theories may suggest. Dalila's situation mirrors the situation of Mary Powell and her family who were on the opposite side of the revolution supporting royalists. Therefore the third theory regards Milton's adaptation of Samson's story as a means of expressing his feelings toward his failed marriage without placing any importance on the blindness since he became blind years after the alleged composing (Rogers, John., 2007).

2.3 A brief account of Samson's story in *the Book of Judges*

In order to understand the practical part, it is crucial to be familiar with the original story of Samson. *The King James Bible* in *the Book of Judges*, chapter thirteen, depicts the events before Samson's birth. An angel visits Samson's mother, who is infertile, and professes that she will be with child, who will be so powerful that he will deliver his people from the Philistines. The angel mentions certain restrictions she has to obey, one of which is that she should not cut the child's hair.

In the fourteenth chapter, the story moves to Samson's adulthood where Samson falls for a woman of Timnath, a Philistine woman. His parents raise objections to him saying that a Nazarite marrying a Philistine woman is unacceptable. Surprisingly, at the end of the chapter the marriage proves to be a part of God's plan. What follows next is the first account of Samson's strength. When he is on his way to propose to the woman of Timnath, he is attacked by a lion. The Spirit of the Lord gives him strength and he rends the lion with his bare hands. After some time he passes by the carcass again and seeing that there is a swarm of bees and that the carcass is filled with honey, which he later offers to his parents. At the wedding, he uses this moment as a riddle for young Philistian men and offers thirty sheets and thirty change of garments for those who solve the riddle. As they seem to fail to solve the riddle, they begin to emotionally blackmail Samson's wife into forcing her husband to tell her the meaning of the riddle. She manages to entice Samson into telling her the right answer and she gives it to the Philistine men. Samson knows they forced his wife to get the right answer and he, in anger, slays thirty Philistian men and took their garments to fulfill what he had

promised. The fourteenth chapter ends with Samson leaving for his father's house and his wife living with another man.

The fifteenth chapter depicts another Samson's heroic act motivated by rage. He catches three hundred foxes, ties them together, attaches a burning torch to their tails and lets them run, which causes the fields of Philistines to catch on fire. This was a reaction to him finding his wife with another man. The Philistines, however, responded with burning the woman of Timnath and her family to death. Samson slays a large number of Philistines in response and then prays to God. Samson goes to Gaza to an harlot and spends the night with her. The Philistines notice that and try to kill him at the gate but unsuccessfully. Thereafter Samson meets Delilah, a Philistine woman, to whom Philistines offer silver if she manages to find the secret of Samson's strength. Samson lies to her three times about the source of his strength and every time she fails and reveals the secret to the Philistines. The fourth time he tells her the truth, despite her breaking his trust three times, that his strength is given to him by God through his long hair which he cannot cut. Delilah waits for him to fall asleep, weaves his hair into braids while he is sleeping and makes a servant cut his hair. This time he is imprisoned and blinded by Philistines and he is forced to work at the mill in Gaza. The Philistines assembled in a temple to make a sacrifice to Dagon for giving Samson into their hands. Samson's hair starts to grow back and as he is called to the temple to entertain them, he prays one last time to God. He prays to give him his strength back in order to avenge his loss of sight. God hears Samson's prayer and gives him his strength back. Samson leans against the supporting pillars at the temple of Dagon and causes them to collapse and destroy the whole temple. That day Samson killed more Philistines than he had ever killed before. Samson's family bury his body next to his father's and the sixteenth chapter concludes that Samson had judged for twenty years in Israel (KJV, Judges 13-16).

Practical Part

In this part of the thesis, I would like to focus on the major differences between Samson, Delilah, the characters from *the Book of Judges* in the Old Testament, and Samson and Dalila from Milton's dramatic poem: *Samson Agonistes*.

1. The Structural Differences between Biblical Samson and Samson Agonistes

The story of biblical Samson is written in the Old Testament in *the Book of Judges* and together with the book of *Joshua* belongs to the Former, early, Prophets. It contains 21 chapters which are divided into verses. The whole book of *Judges* contains descriptions of significant events in the lives of the leaders who engaged in deliverance of the Israelites from their oppressors. However, Samson's story, depicted from the 13th to the 16th chapter and being the longest story in the Book, differs greatly from the stories of the other judges. It is treated as a biography and it is written in the present tense and in chronological order with the beginning marked by the political situation in Israel before Samson's birth and the ending culminating in his heroic death.

John Milton in *Samson Agonistes* portrays Samson being held captive in the prison of Gaza and his last hours before his death. John Milton focuses on the development of the story line occupying only eleven verses in the Old Testament. He creates another layer within the original story line. The layer is rather psychological and alters the original plot by adding three new characters (Harapha, Messenger, Officer) and the encounters with his visitors in the prison. Every character plays an essential addition to the story. Milton decided to enrich the story with them in order to fulfill the objective of making Samson a favorable character, worthy of gaining people's sympathy and to respect the form of the poem by creating a believable storyline. In connection to the new characters, Michael Krouse introduces an unusual reading⁹ of Manoah, Dalila and Harapha. They represent three temptations: Petty humankind, fear and ease, which Samson manages to resist (Butler, George F., 1994).

⁹ Samson meets the first temptation through his father, Manoah, who is trying to comfort Samson and himself, as any father would, by telling him, he did not deserve his fate to be this cruel to him.

Milton uses the device of retrospection to depict some of the most important events of Samson's life which were drawn from *the Book of Judges* and are crucial to know for the reader's understanding of the story. To the retrospection ties the use of various tenses and the use of poetic language, which is different from the biblical version. In Milton's story these parts are usually sang by Samson's friends, represented by the *Chorus* or Samson himself. The end of the story is marked by Samson's death and followed by an ostentatious funeral, which is analogous to the biblical version.

Looking closely into the organization of the two literary writings one can spot many interesting features both texts contain. As Professor Yairah Amit¹⁰ (2009), an Israeli biblical scholar, states *the Book of Judges* contains a cyclical pattern, which the judges fail to break and therefore their leadership fails and the monarchy is created. Since the King James' version deprives the plot line of long and complex descriptions of feelings and emotions, the cyclical patterns, from now on called: repetitive patterns, can be spotted easily throughout the three chapters.

The first repetitive pattern is visible from the 14th chapter to the 15th chapter, where Samson notices a Philistine woman, the woman of Timnath, and he wants to marry her despite his parents' objections¹¹. The second pattern consists of Samson keeping a secret, which is revealed through the betrayal of the woman he loves. The end of the second pattern consists of Samson praying to the Lord¹² and his prayers being answered resulting in Samson slaying many Philistines. These patterns are present in the 16th chapter. Samson once again notices a Philistine woman, this time Delilah, and lives with her, which is the repetition of the first pattern. The part where Delilah betrays Samson and reveals his secret is the next pattern which was present in the 14th chapter. The end of the 16th chapter describes the pattern of Samson praying to God and being heard. The repetitive patterns play an important role

¹⁰ Yairah Amit belongs to the group of authors who wrote *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical Book* (2009)

¹¹ In the 16th chapter, Samuel does not mention any objections on his parents' part, however it is possible to assume that the parents would dissent from Samson's choice of the second spouse if he planned to marry Delilah.

¹² In 15th chapter Samson kills first and then prays, whereas in the 16th chapter he prays first and then kills.

throughout the whole Bible. The use of repetition is used to highlight the importance of the emphasized piece of information be it a character, a theme or an event.

To develop the topic of the repetition further, the reader, who is at least roughly familiar with biblical stories, might have noticed the plethora of reoccurring themes. For example the themes of God's selection, a mistake made by a female character followed by a consequent downfall and God's presence despite the characters' disobedience. One cannot help but notice that Samson's story is similar to the story of Adam and Eve, which was another biblical story that inspired Milton. John Milton used the story and characters of Adam and Eve in his *Paradise Lost* (O'Neal, Sam., 2019).

The aforementioned patterning, present in the biblical version, cannot be found in Milton's adaptation. There are repetitions of certain words in the text but the use of the repetition in this case is not to highlight an important piece of information but rather to add a rhythm to the meter of the poem. The reason for that lies in the form. Milton became a classical writer during the Restoration and he followed the Greek aesthetic framework, which was popular at the time. The Greek aesthetics drew from the dramatic principles by Aristotle, whom Milton admired. The principles can be spotted in this particular poem as well. The unity of time in *Samson Agonistes* is adhered to, since the poem describes the last day of Samson being alive beginning in the morning and ending at noon. It also follows the unity of action since there are no digressions present and the plot is centered around Samson's last day. His psychological development overpowers the action itself. The place of the prison in Gaza results in the unity of place being fulfilled. Samson's heroic acts are described instead of being acted out, his death is also only announced by the Messenger, which complies with the idea of decorum. The added characters, the detailed descriptions of Samson's feelings and reactions to certain situations were necessary to fulfill the principle of likelihood. Therefore, the whole story the way Milton decided to portray is believable (Hughes, Merritt Y., 1964). The ending of *Samson Agonistes* differs from the one in the *King James Bible*, probably due to the principle of likelihood. In the *King James Bible* Samson's father is no longer alive at the time of Samson's death. The last verse of the sixteenth chapter accounts that Samson is buried by his family next to Manoah between Zorah and Eshtaol. However, in *Samson*

Agonistes Manoah is still alive. He is delivered the news of his death by the Messenger and he is both devastated and happy at the same time. The poem ends in verses of praise on Samson's account.

2. The Differences between the Characters of Biblical Samson and Miltonic Samson

2.1. The Appearance

Biblical Samson is a heroic figure who was, interestingly enough, born to common people of not any extraordinary line of descent. He became a nazirite¹³ even before he was born because his mother had to obey nazirite rules during her pregnancy. The nazirites differed from ordinary people in the abstinence from wine or any alcoholic beverages. They grew out their hair as a symbol of power and had no contact with the dead. In Samson's story, he violates the law of contact with a corpse which was acceptable given his objective to liberate Israel from Philistines (Fausset, A., 2014).

Apart from his long hair, in the 14th chapter, verses 5 to 7, we learn that Samson also possessed extraordinary strength. He managed to tear apart a lion and in the 15th chapter he even fought battles on his own against Philistine troops. Another example of Samson's muscular and tough physique is mentioned later on when he carries the door of the city gate on his shoulders. Samson possessed all the signs of manhood among Israelites: the long hair, incredible strength, eloquence and social status of a leader.

However, Milton's Samson is far from heroic¹⁴ as described in *the Book of Judges*. In the opening of the poem, Samson finds himself locked in the prison of Gaza with his eyes put out. He is assigned a new status, from Israel's strongest man to a physically weak slave working at the mill for the people he used to challenge and fight with his bare hands. This is the most palpable difference between the two characters. Nevertheless, Milton pushes Samson's uniqueness even further. His fragile looks, the dirty rags that he is wearing highlight and elevate his character and make him stand out from the others around him. The physical appearance puts his visitors off and they think his physical state mirrors his mental state. During certain moments throughout the storyline there are noticeable similarities to the story of Job and Job's friends (Manoa, Dalila, Harapha). However, further in the poem the readers realize that by losing his physical strength he gained spiritual strength.

¹³ "Nazir Elohim" in Hebrew means "one separated to God"

¹⁴ at least at the beginning. At the end of the poem Samson gains the attribute of a hero.

2.2. The Personality

In *the Book of Judges*, Samson is portrayed not as a prototypical hero who is an irrefutably positive character throughout the whole story, but as somebody who is depersonalized and isolated, acts as he pleases while simultaneously fulfilling God's plan. He is supposed to save Israelites but his actions seem to be primarily motivated by desire without the idea of God's premeditated plan for him in Samson's mind. To support this statement, it is necessary to mention some crucial events in the story. One of those crucial events can be found at the beginning of the story, when Samson wanted to marry a Philistine ¹⁵woman from Timnath. His parents were opposed to the idea that their son, the chosen one, should marry a woman who belongs to the people who oppress Israelites.

Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? (JKV, Judges 14:3).

The use of the adjective “uncircumcised” has a strong impact on the tone of the text. Back in the Old Testament, Genesis 17:10-14, Abraham was told that circumcision of all males should be executed because it was a symbol of purity and devotion to God from a young age (Fausset, A., 2014). The adjective is used intentionally as a pejorative, therefore it implies a certain degree of impurity of Philistines because they did not believe in one almighty God but their religion was polytheistic. Marrying a Philistine woman was thus forbidden. The writer, however, briefly mentions that God intended for Samson to marry that woman. The second example showing Samson's questionable motives is in *the Book of Judges*, 14th chapter, 19th verse, where he kills thirty Philistine men, takes their garments which he had promised to those who would solve the riddle. Samson knew that Philistines would not be able to find the answer to his riddle were it not for his first wife's help. For that reason he chose to fulfill his promise to the Philistines simultaneously by punishing them. Another example of his debatable motivation can be found in *the Book of Judges* at the beginning of the 15th chapter. Samson tries to visit his wife in Timnath, her father tells him he had given her to another man but offers his younger daughter to him instead. Samson punishes him and his people by setting their corn-fields on fire. Samson may be described as vengeful, naive and hot-headed.

¹⁵ interestingly, the woman from Timnath is referred to as “the woman”, similarly as Samson's mother is being referred to as: “the woman”, in the chapter 13.

Paradoxically, Samson's actions are supported by God, which is demonstrated at the end of the 15th chapter, verse 18, where Samson prays to God, He listens and gives him what Samson asks of him. Every battle Samson has fought yet, there appears to be the presence of God, even though the battles were motivated by his personal schedule. The following, 16th, chapter describes Samson's incredible strength yet in another incident, however, this time there is no trace of God's presence, which differs from all the previous militant situations. This situation indicates the beginning of God's disappointment with Samson's behaviour. Curiously, his strength served him even at the times, when God disapproved of his actions. This leads to the conclusion that Samson's actions were regarded overall positively, although his personality remained without any change or remorse till the end.

Milonic Samson is portrayed differently. Milton emphasized his human side and made him more complex than his biblical inspiration. Even the title: *Samson Agonistes* discloses the overall atmosphere of the dramatic poem due to the attribute's meaning: somebody who endures inner struggles. The way Milton decided to deliver Samson's story must have been carefully elaborated beforehand and with the main objective to portray Samson as humanly and as complex as possible in order to help his character gain the readers' sympathy. Milton seems to divert the readers' attention away from Samson's heroism which strips him off of his human side and he alters the story to focus on his miserable life in the prison in Gaza, where Samson is held captive.

In the opening of the poem the choir retells Samson's past as a mighty Israelite warrior contrasting Samson's current, less heroic and more human persona. It is managed through the use of long monologues or dialogues that the protagonist reminisce about his past. The text contains numerous contrasts expressing his regrets and sorrows. The lines 46 to 59 specifically show a different side of Samson from the Samson in the Old Testament. In the monologue, Samson is aware and in deep regret about his main character flaws which are: his weakness for women, susceptibility to desires and the fact that he acts out of spite without considering the effects.

To further develop the main differences between the two Samsons, it is essential to mention his probably most prominent weakness: women. Both stories revolve in a great measure around women, namely: the woman of Timnath, the prostitute and Delilah. His

enemies recognize and use this weakness to defeat him and every time they try to defeat him through women, Samson manages to kill many of his nation's enemies out of rage.

Another difference from the original story is Milton's attitude towards the woman of Timnath (Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 219-226). Milton attributes to his protagonist a deeper connection to God and shifts his motive of marrying the woman of Timnath from an act of lust and passion, which was only used by God afterwards as portrayed in the Bible, to a conscious decision with the goal of saving his people.

...they knew not that what I mention'd was of God; I knew from intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd the Marriage on; that by occasion hence I might begin Israel's Deliverance, The work to which I was devinely call'd; (Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 221-226).

The next, at first negligible, deviation from the biblical version, can be found in the lines 240-276. This part of the poem serves as yet another line of reasoning because Samson openly states that he does not see himself guilty of not saving Israel from their oppressors but he blames:

... Israel's Governours, and Heads of Tribes Who seeing those great acts which God had done Singly by me against their Conquerors Acknowledg'd not, or not at all consider'd Deliverance offerd... (Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 240-276).

Which reflects Milton's own position and feelings towards the Revolution rather than Samson's position, since Samson was appointed a Judge of Israel, meaning that he was the head of Israelites and should blame only himself for the situation he finds himself in.

Another difference between the two characters is tied to the three temptations mentioned by Krouse. Samson in *Samson Agonistes* acknowledges for the first time that he himself is the author of his destiny:

Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me/ But justly; I my self have brought them on
(Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 375-376).

He resists the temptation to shift the blame and accepts what has befallen him instead. At the end of his dialogue with Manoa Samson's character shows great personal development, which is to be further challenged throughout the poem. According to Krouse, Samson's father,

Manoa, provides his son with a temptation of making his sentence easier, mentally and physically, with the prospect of being set free. Samson resists and responds with words expressing the fact that he deserves everything that has happened to him and that he believes that God has put him in the hands of his enemies for a reason.

Another temptation, Dalila, is discussed in the section focusing on miltonic Dalila, where I mention Dalila's attempts to create strong arguments as to why she betrayed Samson. She also tries to make her case by raising the question of religion (Dagon vs. God) and a civil duty.

The last temptation further elaborates on Dalila's ill-conceived argument of religion, intertwining it with a political issue. This offers one of the most significant shifts in Samson's character, which is delivered through a new¹⁶ character added to the story, not present in the biblical version, Harapha. Milton at first invites a similar reading to the biblical model of the Philistines and their god Dagon being inherently bad and Samson and his God inherently good. All this is achieved through back and forth dialogues filled with, what seems to be, rational arguments. At the beginning, the dialogues between the two warriors are of a rather taunting character. Harapha teases Samson:

To combat with a blind man I disdain, And thou hast need much washing to be toucht.

(Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 1105-1106).

And further in his speech he notes, that Samson rebelled against his rulers when he slaughtered Philistines because Israelites were geographically a part of Philistia. Samson's reply is hypocritical because he bases his argument on the fact that he was married twice to Philistine women in order to free his people. Harapha continues and what appears as innocent taunting quickly shifts into insults through which Harapha questions Samson's militant abilities and challenges his own beliefs. Samson backfires and their quarrels turn into religiously infused verbal combat. Harapha uses counterarguments questioning the nature of Samson's God, how could have his God let Samson's enemies put his eyes out, imprison him and force him to work at the Mill for his enemies. One of the most crucial moments in Samson's personal growth is his reply, in which he says that everything that has happened to

¹⁶ Milton added three characters, which are not in the biblical version: The Officer, Harapha and the Messenger. However, out of which only Harapha serves as a tool to tempt Samson

him was well-deserved and from a man who was hot-headed, foolish and susceptible to his physical desires, Samson evolved into a wise man, who carefully chooses his words before uttering them. The character of Harapha supports Milton's objective of Samson's psychological development and redemption. Samson accepts his situation and is aware of his wrongdoings and blames nobody but himself.

The ending of the poem invites the reader to believe that his suicide was motivated by the vision of God's right timing and Samson's conscious incentive to save his people and Milton gradually transforms Samson into a spiritually mature character that his biblical predecessor failed to become (Krouse, Michael F., 1949).

The biblical version, as mentioned before, does not portray Samson in such a positive light. Samson remains self-centered till the end of the story. In *the Book of Judges* Samson holds a different attitude toward his fate:

Give me strength just this once, O God, to take revenge of the Philistines, if only for one of my two eyes (KJV, Judges, 16:28).

Biblical Samson did not commit suicide with the goal of protecting his people. His last words insinuate that the only incentive to commit suicide was a ruthless revenge for his blindness. However, once again, his actions motivated by desire were used¹⁷ by God to protect his people. This leads to the conclusion that biblical Samson does not show remorse for his actions but rather feeds his anger with Philistines and he remains without any changes to his character throughout the whole story.

As mentioned earlier, biblical Samson possessed all the signs of manhood: the long hair indicating his uniqueness as a nazirite, incredible strength, rhetoric competence and a social status of a leader. However, when it came to his mental maturity, he showed signs of childish, immature behaviour contrasting his manly looks. According to Stephen M. Wilson (2014), one of the signs of Samson's inability to become a man, apart from his rashness, is the fact that he did not fulfill his duty as an Israelite man to bring his own child into the world.

¹⁷ in this scene Samson killed more Philistines than in his previous battles

Among the many borders that Samson is unable to cross permanently is that separating boyhood and manhood. Samson, in other words, is a perpetual man-child (Wilson, Stephen M., 2014).

Stephen M. Wilson (2014) in his article also points out the fact that Samson's immature character is analogous with Israel. Both are the chosen by God and given an advantageous position from the beginning but do not make the most of their blessings. They find themselves following rather destructive patterns and are stuck in a cycle which hinders them in their efforts to gain personal, religious and political growth.

3. The Differences between the Characters of Delilah and Dalila

3.1. The Differences Concerning the Origin of the Names

According to professor John Rogers (2007), Milton made alterations to the names of the characters¹⁸ only in order to beautify the poem and make it more classicist. Therefore when I mention Delilah in this thesis, it is referring to the female character from the Bible and when speaking of Dalila, it refers to the female character from *Samson Agonistes* (Rogers, John., 2007).

In Hebrew names given to people carried a meaning. Delilah in Hebrew meant "delicate, weak or even languishing". Knowing the meaning of the name, it presents the biblical story with a sharp contrast, because Samson is portrayed as a very masculine and strong individual. Delilah, despite her attributed "weakness and fragility", manages to defeat the greatest warrior of her time (Brown, Francis, et al., 1906).

Another take on the origin of Delilah's name is by J.Cheryl Exum. The author provides another perspective as she mentions that the name serves as a play on words of Hebraic: "láyla" meaning: "night". Compared to the literal translation of Samson's name originating from Hebrew "shemesh" meaning "the Sun", these two protagonists become the perfect opposites (Exum, J. Cheryl., 2009).

Delilah lived in the valley of Sorek. The literal translation of Nahal Sorek¹⁹ is "red grapes". Samson was supposed to beware alcohol "drinke no wine nor strong drink" (KJV, Judges 13:7). Symbolically, God could have known that Delilah would cause Samson's downfall. That is why Samson was ordered to "drinke no wine" insinuating that he should avoid the Valley of Sorek (Orr, James., 1915).

¹⁸Samson's father *Manoah* is altered to *Manoa*

¹⁹ *nachal* means "the valley", *sorek* means "vine, grapevine"

3.2. The Differences Concerning the Character Psychology between Dalila and Delilah and the Alterations to the Plot

Delilah, as far as the character psychology and thought processes are concerned, is not depicted in such a great deal as Dalila's in *Samson Agonistes*. Biblical Delilah is regarded as the main villain of the story. She appears in the 16th chapter from the verse 4 to 20, offering very little information about her character. The 16th chapter parallels the story of Samson's previous love interest, the Philistine woman of Timnath. Samson desires a Philistine woman again. Her name is Delilah. This is the first time in the story that a woman character is given a proper name because up to this point, the female characters were called either: "a woman" or "a prostitute". This draws the reader's attention to her in particular.

The plot continues and Samson meets Delilah. There is no verse describing any objections on the part of Samson's parents. This was because the Bible describes no such event as marriage between Samson and Delilah.

In the 5th verse, Delilah has to make a choice between her partner and eleven hundred pieces of silver. In this particular instance, her character is often contrasted to the woman of Timnath. In *the Book of Judges*²⁰, the pressure on the Philistine woman of Timnath is immense because her own people threaten her that they will burn down her and her father's house if she does not reveal Samson's secret²¹, whereas Delilah can choose either her partner or money. Delilah is portrayed as shallow whereas the previous woman earns the readers' sympathy due to her being forced to make a difficult choice.

In the poem, however, Milton creates a stronger case for Dalila than Samuel in *the Book of Judges*. According to Krouse, Dalila is the second temptation in *Samson Agonistes*. She tries to make her case by raising a question of religion, civil duty and love because her character has to make a decision to either betray her husband or her people and Dagon. There is no mention of the eleven hundred pieces of silver. In the poem, the author decided to unite Samson and Dalila in marriage, which differs from the biblical Samson, who is not married to Delilah. Milton also decided to describe her appearance to create even stronger visual contrast

²⁰ KJV, Judges 14:15-18

²¹ in this case the secrets mean the answer to his riddle.

between the two characters. Conversely, in *the Book of Judges*, Delilah's physique remains a mystery, since it is not depicted at all.

Dalila comes onto the scene in the line 732 and further in the poem, in all of her statements, she demonstrates her mastery of speech. During her first appearance, she visits Samson in his cell. Her behaviour seems very timid and full of guilt. She expresses remorse through admitting her wrongdoings and does not hesitate to say that she still cares for her husband. She describes her betrayal as: "My rash but more unfortunate misdeed" (Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 748). Milton manages to depict her personality through such nuance as opportunistic, self-centered and dissimulative. In Dalila's next entry, Milton gives her character more depth when she tries to explain her motives as to why she betrayed her husband. Dalila continues to shower Samson with her words of remorse seeking his forgiveness. She shifts the blame of all her actions on her unconditional love that resulted in jealousy, the fact that she is a woman and insinuates that women are extremely curious but cannot keep secrets; and the fear of him leaving her, as he did to his previous wife. She also mentions his old heroic self, which serves as a contrast to his current state: weak, blind, imprisoned and lonely. In Samson's following response, Milton individually names everything that stood before him and the decision to marry Dalila. According to the text he had to give up his religion, parents and nation to which Dalila reacts: "In argument with men a woman ever Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause" (Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 903-904). Seeing that she is not going to win by gaining his forgiveness, Dalila's next step in the reconciliation is to seduce him with her words once again by using his impaired vision against him. She promises to take care of his other senses herself. His response shows a substantial shift in Samson's character development because he does not fall for her words anymore. He knows her "trains though dearly to my cost" (Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 932-933) and "have learn't To fence my ear against thy sorceries" (Milton, John., *Samson Agonistes*, lines 936-937). Conversely, Dalila in her last entry falls into her old ways and the reader learns that her words were filled with lies complementing her insincere impulses as she turns a defense into an attack. She states that she became a national female hero who defeated the mightiest Israeli warrior among her people. Dalila claims that she will be talked about by not only the future generations of Philistines but also by other tribes and her betrayal will be highly regarded and even celebrated.

Milton managed to portray Dalila as a cunning traitress without any positive development of her character. While analyzing her entries, she oftentimes blames her previous behaviour, which led her to betray Samson, on external influences such as the Philistines, her duty to her people, or Samson himself due to his previous relationships. Dalila leaves the reader pondering whether her motives were sincere at any point in the poem because of her well thought-out arguments. The vivid arguments between the separated couple, Samson and Dalila, mirror Milton's personal experience. His wife's family supported Royalists, contrary to Milton. Therefore the personal character of the arguments illustrate that the author imprinted his own beliefs and values in them.

This reading is not possible in the Biblical version of the story. There is no evidence of Samson being married to Delilah nor is there any evidence of Delilah paying a visit to Samson in the prison. Delilah is simply enticed by the lure of "eleven hundred pieces of silver" (KJV, The Book of Judges 16, 5), which she chooses over of her partner. Samuel deprived Delilah of the moral component in her character and stripped her of any emotions. While in *Samson Agonistes* Milton gives her at least some human qualities, when Dalila shows remorse and gives reasons as to why she betrayed Samson.

Milton assigns to Dalila the attributes of an expert in treachery and manipulation as he elaborates on Dalila's greediness found in *the Book of Judges*. He creates a plot where she seeks to reconcile with her husband and when she does not meet the result she hoped for, which is forgiveness, she begins to use her mightiest weapons in order to gain control over Samson once again. From that point she becomes the embodiment of temptation. For the first time Samson resists her words of flattery and insincere remorse resulting in his personal victory which causes his character to advance in the development of his psyche.

4. Similarities between Samson and Dalila

Even though these two characters seem to be the perfect opposites at the first glance, there are a few similarities which are essential to a more thorough understanding of the poem.

Samson and Dalila are both portrayed by Milton as those who represent their people. Samson represents the Israelites and Dalila represents the Philistines. The objective of their characters is making their people proud and setting them “free”. Samson wants to set the Israelites free from the Philistine oppression and Dalila wants to set her nation free from the people who are in revolt against them.

One of many possible interpretations of the poem offers similarity where both of them are facing the same question. This interpretation considers Dalila to be a woman who loves Samson, therefore this reading is in favour of her being a positive character rather than a treacherous one. Samson and Dalila must decide between individual and collective interests. As far as Samson is concerned, Dalila represents a forbidden fruit. Samson’s parents expressed disapproval of his choice of a future spouse many times. They viewed the situation that him being a nazirite, therefore considered to hold a certain level of sanctity, indicates that he should be extremely disciplined and more cautious than other people. Likewise Dalila is facing the same question. She falls for a man who should be her enemy, not a love interest and has to make a decision based either on her personal reasons or on the reasons of her people.

The most protruding commonality is their “ultimacy”. They both represent the ultimate male and female character. Samson is the embodiment of manhood. He possesses the ultimate strength and power an ordinary man could dream of. The next quality he has is a remarkable degree of eloquence. The reader learns through his entries that he is a man of silver tongue, which was one of highly respected qualities of a man of the Old Testament. The last characteristics of Samson’s manhood is the fact that he was close to God and spoke to Him frequently and in bold manner.

Milton attributed exquisite femininity to Dalila:

... female of sex it seems, that so bedeckt, ornate, and gay... with all her bravery on,
and tackle trim,... courted by all the winds that hold them play; An amber
scent of odorous perfume, Her harbinger, a damsel train behind; Some rich
Philistian matron she may seem; ... Like a fair flower surcharg’d with dew ...
(Milton, John., Samson Agonistes, lines 711-727).

To her looks, she is also attributed eloquence and bravery. The last thing she possesses and which, according to Milton, accentuates her femininity is her traitorous act. Milton attacks and generalizes her treacherousness assigning it to every female sex as the universal characteristics of an ultimate woman.

Another commonality between Samson and Dalila is their susceptibility to lying. They prove dishonest in almost every instance. Samson lies to his parents about the origin of the honey and makes them eat it despite revealing the fact that it comes from a carcass of a lion. The most significant moment of Samson's not telling the truth is when he is at home with Dalila and lies three times to her about the source of his strength when asked. Dalila breaks his trust four times, when she asks about the secret behind his strength and continues to lie²² to him when paying a visit at the prison of Gaza.

The last similarity between the two characters is their mental development throughout the poem. Their characters undergo a shift which causes them not to stay the same as at the beginning of the poem. Samson learns how to resist his weakness for women. He learns how to pay attention to the words Dalila utters without falling into a trap. Samson also becomes more fixed in his tenets than he used to be at the beginning of the poem.

Dalila comes onto the scene as a fragile and defenseless woman who came to reconcile with her husband in order to take him back home hoping to grow old with him. However, she leaves as an empowered woman who is not afraid to release herself from the traditionalist view on life lived in the union of marriage and would rather be known as the woman who conquered the most powerful man in the Philistian history on her own.

Both characters wanted primarily the exact thing and faced similar questions which lead them, oddly, to become archenemies but in the eyes of their own people they both acquired a title of a national hero.

²² it is not possible to count the exact number of her lies in the prison of Gaza because of many possible interpretations of her words.

5. Conclusion

The poem *Samson Agonistes* is hardly ever compared to its original inspiration *Samson* in the *Book of Judges*. Exploring the differences as well as the similarities between the two literary works provides a new perspective on the messages in the dramatical poem and the author himself.

The first focus of this thesis were the structural differences between biblical Samson and miltonic Samson. It is evident that the main objective is to accentuate the psychological development of Samson and to awaken sympathy for him, therefore the descriptions of feelings and emotions are prevalent throughout the whole poem and the action is overshadowed. For that reason the dialogues and monologues, written in the same meter, are employed. Conversely, the biblical story emphasizes the action over the psychological descriptions of the characters. The use of simple sentences without almost any poetic devices make the plot seem straightforward. The most prevalent literary devices are the use of repetition and the presence of the patterns whose function is to highlight the most important parts of the tale.

All of the differences discussed from the second to the third chapter are tied to the autobiographical features throughout the poem. The most substantial one in this thesis is Samson's weak appearance, whereas the biblical adaptation describes Samson as a heroic figure possessing superhuman strength. *Samson Agonistes* is considered to be an autobiographical masterpiece usually due to the protagonist's blindness. However, it is possible to assume that John Milton related to Samson's character on more levels than the lost eyesight. Milton illustrates an image of a physically weak hero, which may lead the reader to believe that Milton was in the same desolate physical state. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily comment on the appearance on Milton's part, but it represents the mental state. Samson in *Samson Agonistes* is depicted as a revolutionary figure and a supporter of Israel's independence. Samson fights without any trained army in order to set his people free. The subtle alterations that Milton made to the plot show sympathy toward Samson's character because he himself was a revolutionary figure as he wrote politically engaged literature and fought for the English through the means of the written word. Milton found himself in the similar position to Samson when he was imprisoned. From a supporter of the Republic who experienced a victory when Commonwealth was established to a weakened man who had to

deal with a devastating defeat when the monarchy was restored again. The feelings of defeat, disappointment and shame are veiled in the metaphor of physical distress. Milton's adaptation invites to see Samson as a rather positive character compared to the biblical Samson who presents himself as self-serving and full of flaws. In *the Book of Judges* Biblical Samson remains the same until the end of the story. He does not wish to set his people free from the Philistines in the first place. He primarily uses the gift of strength, given to him by God, irresponsibly to meet his own needs not the needs of his people nor God. The climactic moment at the end of the story only highlights Samson's selfish motives since he wants God to give him his strength back in order to avenge his lost eyesight.

... Samson is one of the judges of Israel; but he has obviously missed his calling. His undergraduate escapades of the Gaza gates and the torch-bearing foxes; his susceptibility to feminine allurements; his absurd riddle with humorless consequences, to the final catastrophe there is hardly a dignified moment in his career... (Baum, P. F., 1921).

It is possible to assume that Milton wanted to clear his own name through the different approach to the story of Samson. Milton transformed Samson into a man who undergoes a change in his own mind, acknowledges his wrongdoings, confesses his sins and surrenders himself into God's hands. After having fought for the Republic, which failed years later, Milton did not stop writing although his name was synonymous with rebellion and during the years of the Restoration of the monarchy he had to be careful because of the Licensing Act of 1662 (Achinstein, Sharon., 1996). However, John Milton still managed to express through *Samson Agonistes* that he acknowledges his mistakes and continues to remain faithful to God.

Another dissimilarity which Milton applied is directed at the relationship between Samson and Dalila. In the Bible, *King James' Version*, there is no word about Samson and Delilah being married. They are merely described as a couple who lives together, which is not surprising given the fact that Samson visited a harlot at the beginning of the 16th chapter. It serves as yet another indicator of Samson's disobedience in terms of God's laws and it shows degeneracy of the Philistines. However, Milton calls Dalila Samson's wife with which he pushes the story in a slightly different direction than Samuel. He tries to gain readers'

sympathy because a betrayal of one's own spouse is in general viewed as a malicious act and would play in Samson's favor. As professor John Rogers claims, the fact that Milton's wife Mary Powell and her parents were on the side of the Crown during the Revolution was the reason as to why Milton wrote the dialogues of Samson and Dalila in such a personal manner. Milton experienced a separation from his wife Mary Powell due to different political beliefs and views similarly to Samson and Delilah which reveals the reason behind Samson and Dalila's marriage in *Samson Agonistes*. It was simply another autobiographical addition to the poem causing the main character of the poem to become the parallel of the author.

All the modifications that Milton decided to make have an impact on the message of the both stories of Samson. *The Book of Judges* focuses on a self-serving protagonist, who was a nazirite blessed since his mother's womb but he was acting as he pleased. Interestingly enough he seemed to have an intimate relationship with God and even though he violated a few laws given by God, he received many blessings and whenever he prayed to Him for anything, God granted all of his wishes, which makes this story extraordinary from the other biblical stories. Biblical Samson is used to highlight God's greatness and patience with his people, while Milton's adaptation accentuates the protagonist. Milton's objective of the story does not revolve around the theological message. The character of Samson was an ideal tool for Milton to clear his own name because they both shared many similarities. During their time they both found themselves admired by many and also disliked by many. Miltonic Samson fought for his people with God on his side, as well as Milton during the Revolution who had set a goal for himself which was to create a democratic republic inspired by the biblical theology. He believed that Oliver Cromwell was the one to meet the requirements of a leader obedient to God, however this ideal did not succeed and John Milton was left, as Samson, alone and devastated. Samson was a hero who made many mistakes and fought inner battles which resulted in a development of his character, as the protagonist evolved and did not remain the same as he was at the beginning of the poem.

The climactic ending of the poem could possibly entail that Milton wished to be redeemed of his corrupted reputation which he had been assigned due to the Restoration of monarchy. The differences between biblical and Miltonic Samson enable to understand the author's intention behind the poem on a deeper level and therefore indicate that *Samson Agonistes* should be read solely as Milton's autobiographical literary work and not as a scripture.

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