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## MILTON'S AND NJEGOŠ'S SATAN: THE DARKNESS BEARER?\*\*\*

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to investigate the similarities and differences in the representation of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Njegoš's *The Ray of the Microcosm*. Putting in focus the same topic of human primordial sin and the downfall of Satan, these two epics would be expected to overlap to a great extent. However, once the texts are read, it is discovered that although all the basic elements of the story do exist, the overall presentation and the overwhelming feeling which the reader is left with are quite unlike. The figure of Satan will be taken as the key figure for the disentanglement of this knot.

Who was more questioning than Satan? If he only posed questions, how can it be that he was pigeonholed as a negative character and put in eternal Hell? Is it justifiable to put a stigma of negativity on Satan's cause from the very beginning, and, by doing so, renounce absolutely every right for his rebellion? The two angles of this question as presented in the epics *Paradise Lost* and *The Ray of the Microcosm* will be indicated in this paper.

**Keywords:** Satan, Satan's rebellion, God, the word of God, the fall of humans.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Two great writers at the opposite ends of Europe were preoccupied with the same thought: how to discover the truth about human beginning, what to take as the source? One of them saw the scheme indubitably developed

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from the original source in the whirlwind of his own time, while the other one dove deep into himself to find the answers to the question of his own beginning.

The moments in which these two greats created were different, consequently, the search itself had to be somewhat different. “John Milton was born on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1608 in London, Bread Street, as the biographers say, at ‘the Sign of the Spread Eagle’” (Bolfan, Kosanović 2014: 16).<sup>1</sup> He started writing his first poems in his youth and developed his thought independently guided by role models from antiquity. “In the halls of the school, only Latin was spoken. Milton’s early school training would have covered authors like Ovid, Cicero, Vergil, and Julius Caesar – much as would Shakespeare’s training at a grammar school in Stratford” (Flannagan 2002: 6). Travelling across Europe, Milton got to know the worlds which had only been accessible to him in literature up till then, and he returned forever changed. “Modern critics and biographers tend to see Milton as prophet rather than just as controversialist” (Ibid: 13). Milton started seeing his England as the prison of free spirit in which the king without the true right decided on the destiny of the whole state. Thus, he stepped on the side of the new order which was supposed to set that spirit free. War was imminent in the England of Milton’s time in order to settle the dispute over who had the right to rule the country. What followed was the regicide “that appalled the whole of Europe” (Bolfan, Kosanović 2014: 12), but what ensued was the time which Milton might have characterised as pregnant with hope. That pregnancy reflected also in the fact that they were set free from Protestantism as the dominant religion, which meant turning away from indoctrination towards the religion which was deemed as independent<sup>2</sup> “arguing that within the institution of the Protestant Church certain particulars of belief should be left to the scrutiny and choice of the individual worshipper” (Bradford 2001: 6).

Freedom in thought, freedom in religion, but in reality, brooding over the pamphlets in which he defended the Republic, Milton failed to notice that hateful predetermination had crept into Cromwell’s being soundlessly, and in such a world, Milton’s thought became obsolete. Felling unable to come to terms with the limiting of the freedom of speech for whose surveillance he was in charge, Milton retreated into the darkness of his eternal night in which he would come back to literature as the only possible solution for

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<sup>1</sup> All the translations from Serbian are provided by the author of the text.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the religion was Independency.

the collapse of the idea which had seemed so universally appealing. Such were the conditions in which *Paradise Lost* was written, “according to some data c. 1658” (Bolfan, Kosanović 2014: 22).<sup>3</sup> Biblical plot, interwoven with intellectual diving into the antique literature make *Paradise Lost* an homage to human thought. Did Milton find the solution to his weary dilemma in it? Dušan Puhalo (1966: 197) claims that is the ideological blueprint which can be found at the foundation of this epic, Milton “is looking for the way out of the given situation” in it, to turn defeat into victory. In his endeavour to find justification for his own people, he discovered the universality of human accident which could have been properly represented only in the story of the loss of Eden.

Almost two centuries later, the future prince bishop Rade Tomov, Petar II Petrović Njegoš was born in Njeguši. Seemingly different life circumstances, but the inquiring spark led him to the same question, to the investigating of this world and a more profound understanding of man himself – the spark in Prince Bishop’s epic. However, to come to that spark, he had to plunge his mind into various writings which shelter part of that wisdom. The full scope of his research becomes more apparent in Miron Flašar’s (Мирон Флашар) study *Njegoš and antiquity* (*Njegoš i antika*, 1997), in which Prince Bishop’s reading list is reconstructed based on his notes. Just like Milton, who devoted himself to the studious research of human mental endeavours upon finishing his studies, Prince Bishop, who occupied a significant position of the sacral and secular ruler of a small country limited by other countries’ influences, but also as a man who pondered the destiny of human accident, he reached out for all the sources in which he could discover something more about that question. Thus, he set off on a journey through antiquity, and with the assistance of Russian translations, he got acquainted with the contemporary thought of the parts of Europe beyond his reach. That is the key point of this study. It is known that Prince Bishop was familiar with Milton’s work and that he read it in Russian translation.<sup>4</sup> However, his personal copy full of handwritten notes is lost (Савић Ребац 2015: 638). Perhaps there would

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<sup>3</sup> In the text published in the journal for literature in translation *Mostovi*, Veselin Kostić (1998) states that this is not correct and that the work was written in 1665.

<sup>4</sup> Writing about the kabbalistic influence in *The Ray of the Microcosm*, Nemanja Radulović (Радуловић 2009: 107) mentions that Martinists from Moscow were particularly interested in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and that they printed the translation of this work; he comments that “it would be interesting to know if Njegoš’s copy of the Russian translation of Milton’s work was from the masonic typography”.

have been no need for the numerous studies which later appeared had this copy not been lost. It is known on the basis of Prince Bishop's notebooks that he conducted a serious research of some parts of *Paradise Lost*, e.g., the note about Milton's comparison of Adam and Eve with Deucalion and Pyrus from which stemmed a long note about the deluge, which, according to Flašar (Флашар 1997: 310), can be regarded as a valid reason to ask oneself if that is "the testament of Njegoš's concentrated and studious reading of *Paradise Lost*". Be that as it may, other battles awaited Prince Bishop too, which led his mind to discover the (seemingly) unknowable distant parts of the truth about human origin on his own.

His people fought both the natural and human enemy, and so Prince Bishop had to fight both with himself and nature to release his country from the Ottoman danger.

Prince Bishop knew about patriotic love by law; and for the truth of a fighter and hero. Prince Bishop's ideal theory, partially based on Plato, would have been the theory of Prince Bishop poet. The poet saw "the holy sympathy" in the universe, the thinker saw the general devouring. In life, Prince Bishop knew about the hunger of people, misfortune, fight. (Секулић 1971: 168)

That is how *The Ray of the Microcosm* came into being. Although it is too wide a gulf that separates these two thinkers, it is becoming increasingly obvious that there exists one point at which they are indubitably connected – struggle is what connects them and what acts as the trigger, taking them outside the comfort of the existence without questioning.<sup>5</sup> The epics differ in the number of cantos – it took double the number of cantos for Milton to speak of heaven which people lost due to their sin, while Prince Bishop needed six cantos for the description of the heavenly battle and the downfall of Satan and his legions, and in that, the loss of people's right to live in Eden. The titles of these two works might reveal why Milton needed more cantos to express his thought. Without concealing his intentions, Milton gives his epic such a title to convey the message that his attention will be focused on the reason for the loss of the garden of Eden – he will show his readers what has brought to that state and he does that consistently by immediately

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<sup>5</sup> "Those similarities stem from the fact that the two writers related by the direction of their intellect and imagination, and both fighters – one was a fighter for the Commonwealth, and the other for the national freeing of his people – approached the same construct of conceptions and dealt with it in the poetry of the same literary form; but that makes the differences visible both in the individual conceptions and in the way they are connected" (Савић Ребац 2015: 653).

introducing his audience to the consequences of the war in heaven. His epic commences with the image of Satan who is in the pit of sulphuric Hell together with his legions. On the other hand, Njegoš seemingly does not tell anything with the title of his epic if the audience is not acquainted with the it. Who or what is the ray of the microcosm? It is only in the fourth canto that Njegoš brings Satan – the cause of human sinning – to the foreground.

If Milton and Njegoš sing of the same god, how can it be that Milton's God is peaceful in cases where Njegoš's is wrathful? If they sing of the same Adam, how can it be that Njegoš's Adam sins twice, while Milton's sins only because of Eve? If they sing of the same Satan, how can it be that one looks like a true bearer of free thought, and the other as the illegitimate usurper of God's peace? The answers to these questions will be sought out in the traces of the Light Bearer.

## 2. SATAN'S REBELLION

People have pondered the origin of the whole world from the very beginning, but the answer has always been incomplete. There is one who asked, but his question is infallibly seen in the light of the consequences which that question caused. The Son of Dawn was the first one who brought God's primacy into question. Why did that happen?

"Njegoš's understanding, hinging on antiquity, takes it one step ahead: according to him, God did not create the original matter. He and the matter have always existed" (Slijepčević 1972: 148). In *The Ray of the Microcosm*, Njegoš depicts the world in the following way: God and the matter have existed before everything and he is the one who arranges everything. Rays which have their own existence, will and freedom spread from him as the illuminating core, but the force that directs them towards him, according to Njegoš, are the laws which maintain the order as it is.<sup>6</sup> The actions of the force which brings God's primacy into question are grounded in a very

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<sup>6</sup> "Njegoš [...] accepted the knowledge of pre-existence, of the original man's life in heaven, which can be found in Origen, the religious thinker from the beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> century, who tried to justify biblical stories on the ground of their allegorical nature and make peace between Christianity and Platonism. That understanding in many forms can be found in Gnosticism, numerous Medieval sects, our Bogomils and in particular French Albigensians, who conceived soul as a fallen angel, punished to be bound by body" (Билас 2017: 310).

simple supposition – what was before God? Is his story a blatant lie devised to keep his creations under his rule? It is Satan who wants to break that chain and harmony by questioning his primacy.

And when our foe in blindness and conceit  
Pretends and boasts that he created all,  
Myself and you, and all my radiant host –  
A hidden chance all being has engendered,  
It called us forth to life to set the rules  
To being and its limits draw to pride,  
To share with heaven's haughty lord his power,  
And to enjoy the gift of equal rights.  
(*The Ray of the Microcosm*,<sup>7</sup> IV, 1088–1095)

Thus speaks the Light Bearer when Michael asks him to return to the old state and to stop the heavenly battle. Essentially, he has only one request for the archangels – he neither asks of them to join his army nor to see everything from his point of view. What he requires is for them to see freely the world which is at their disposal and to think about its conception. He propounds the critical reasoning of reality and not the dogmatic acceptance of what is given as reality. “Since God’s rule according to Satan is the product of sheer accident and metaphysically unjustifiable, Satan in the end openly states that it is necessary to reinstate the original state” (Петронијевић 1924: 95). Different interpretations of the original state in this case brought about the conflict and an unusual conclusion offers itself – Satan, the fallen angel, fell exclusively because he did not want to submit to something he did not believe in, which changes the perspective altogether.

All the value system differences aside, there is a common point in God’s and Satan’s versions of the motifs for the rebellion: that is the before from which God starts and which Satan sets as the aim of his intention. It is only this before that connects the logic of God’s *poiesis* and the logic of Satan’s rebellion. [...] Because he activates that before in God’s truth, Satan’s rebellion is ontologically well-founded: it is not sheer stealing of power, but bringing forth the untruth at the core of God’s truth. (Јомнар 2010: 374)

What is much more obvious in Milton’s epic remains the question which cannot be answered for certain for the time being in Njegoš’s epic – did Satan decide to rebel out of vanity and then retroactively claimed

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<sup>7</sup> Henceforth referred to as *R. M.*

that this had been the reason for his rebellion? These might be the first glimpses of similarity between these two epics. Namely, Milton's Satan is not stirred only by his pondering the rightfulness of God's rule, his motives are, one could claim, much more prosaic, while Njegoš seems to have chosen only one of them in order to show the true enigma that Satan's rebellion constitutes. Milton's Satan speaks wrathfully, haughtiness makes him act, envy encourages him to move from the passivity of the other archangels.

But not so waked  
Satan – so call him now; his former name  
Is heard no more in Heaven: he, of the first,  
If not the first Archangel, great in power,  
In favour, and pre-eminence, yet fraught  
With envy against the Son of God, that day  
Honoured by his great Father, and proclaimed  
Messiah, King Anointed, could not bear,  
Through pride, that sight, and through himself impaired.  
(*Paradise Lost*,<sup>8</sup> V, 657–665)

While Njegoš's Satan speaks based on his discovery of truth, or at least justifiably doubts the existing order, Milton's Satan, whom Raphael describes as one of the first archangels, is stirred by such a basic and almost childish feeling. "God has chosen to elevate someone else over me, so God has rejected me, not just now, but forever" (Olofson Thickstun 2007: 38). Not postponing revenge for a second, he tricks his legions into gathering, under the excuse "to prepare / fit entertainment to receive our King, / the great Messiah" (*P.L.*, V, 689–691); he uses that gathering to call God's rule into question, cladding all the time his wrath with the words of just rebellion. The nullity of his idea seems so repulsive that it becomes quite difficult to understand how the Romanticists could have ever seen in him the great hero of Milton's epic. However, Satan's grandness is revealed in the subsequent cantos, which made Shelly claim the following:

Milton's poem has in itself a philosophical refutation of the system for which, by strange and natural antithesis, it was the main popular support. Nothing can excel the energy and magnificence of Satan's character as depicted in *Paradise Lost*. It is wrong to assume that the intention was to use him for the embodiment of evil. (Puhalo 1966: 216)

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<sup>8</sup> Henceforth referred to as *P.L.*

The twist happens in his seducing words, in his ability to turn into someone who would make everything more appealing and necessary to the others.<sup>9</sup> In creating Satan, Milton had to justify his rebellion with the reason which had to be acceptable enough as the cause of rebellion, and by the same token, equally repulsive in order to be characterised as such; that is why he is always in torment when he has to write Satan's grandiose speeches, because he has to take them down from majestic oratorical heights and neutralise them (Waldock 1999: 83–86).

Satan's transformation which takes place in the course of a very short break in which God informs his Son about Satan's intent is incredible. From childish stubbornness caused by the fact that the beloved parent showed preference to someone else over him, Satan transforms into an unbelievable orator who can convince one third of the heavenly army to join him in his fight with the strength of his words.

Who saw  
When this creation was? Remember'st thou  
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?  
We know no time when we were not as now;  
Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised  
By our own quickening power when fatal course  
Had circled his fill orb, the birth mature  
Of this our native Heaven, Ethereal Sons.  
Our puissance is our own; our own right hand  
Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try  
Who is our equal: then thou shalt behold  
Whether by supplication we intend  
Address and begirt the Almighty Throne  
Beseeching or besieging.  
(*P.L.*, V, 856–869)

Does Satan mention anything that could look to the angels like a personal rebellion in his speech? Are there any traces of individual motives, or is the speech clad in such words that it would make everyone think? There lies Satan's strength – in the imperceptibility of his intentions, in the apparent good that he offers to everyone by releasing them from the dogma

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<sup>9</sup> "With Milton, the Evil One definitely assumes an aspect of fallen beauty, of splendour shadowed by sadness and death; he is 'majestic though in ruin'. The Adversary becomes strangely beautiful [...]. Accursed beauty is a permanent attribute of Satan [...]" (Praz 1951: 56).



which they themselves cannot see, and conceals his own gain so cunningly that no one can spot a trace of it in his speeches. Such is the deftness with which Milton depicts Satan. As intellectual readers who will not be so easily swayed by embellished speeches or false hopes of release from tyranny, which actually only changes one shape for the other – for what Satan does if not mimic God and substitute God's sovereignty with his own (Peter 1961: 38) – we cannot turn a blind eye to the possible parallelism between God and Satan.<sup>10</sup> However, Milton has clearly indicated his own stand on this point. He both highlights the grandness of Satan despite his downfall and very skilfully plants the seed of doubt which Satan's words leave behind. Whose words does Milton want to evoke in the minds of his readers when Satan utters the famous sentence "It is better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven"<sup>11</sup> if not Caesar's words "I had rather be first in a village than second in Rome", alluding simultaneously to the generally accepted Renaissance depiction of Caesar as "a cunning, selfish and vain tyrant" (Puhalo 1966: 190)?<sup>12</sup>

Satan directs the speech in which he questions God's primacy towards Abdiel – who is Milton's creation, no such character exists in biblical texts or other possible sources – but he says that Abdiel should convey the message not to God but to his "anointed" (*P.L.*, V, 870). The implication is clear – Satan does not direct his words of rebellion towards God, but his Son. What the readers know, Satan surely cannot know (for if he knew God's intention, he would possess equal power as God himself) and that is that God has already seen him flying to gather an army against him, but he has informed his son of it and said that he would fight Satan's legions. If it could be conceived that Satan found out about God's decision, it would be clear why he directs those words at the Son. Since such a thought has to be rejected as ungrounded, it must be investigated why Satan acts in such a way.

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<sup>10</sup> Just as it is the case with Njegoš's depiction of the relationship between God and Satan in which the difference lies only in the interpretation of what was before.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to notice that there is a clear allusion to the words which Achilles says to Odysseus when Odysseus comforts him because he is dead. Achilles says that he would rather be a slave but alive than to rule the dead. More will be said about Milton's distortions of antique sources, but one of the implications of this change could be a potential depiction of how a true fighter, of whom Satan is a diametral opposition, accepts his own destiny. The only thing that is important to Satan is to rule, no matter at what cost, while Achilles has realised his mistake and would rather be among the living stripped of his fame.

<sup>12</sup> C. S. Lewis has indicated that Satan is referred to as "sultan" on a number of occasions and the title itself was despised in Milton's England as a symbol of tyranny (Ibid: 190).

The first cause of Satan's rebellion is his envy, not towards God's power, but towards the fact that, although he was, in Raphael's words, maybe the first among the archangels, the Son of God was anointed instead of him. Thus, his rage is directed towards the Son, and through him, towards God who has all the power. His mind got twisted the moment when his primacy was negated and he wanted to show that God had made a mistake in overlooking him by defeating his Son; having shown that, he would introduce the possibility that God was not the most competent one to rule and that was how he would call his primacy into question. Milton wants to justify God's acts in his epic (theodicy), he does not question God (Стојановић 1940: 104). He "cannot be a tyrant, as Satan claims, because he is by Nature better than the ones he rules over" (Bolfan, Kosanović 2014: 51). "Milton's God, who is directly involved in all the events, has retained his philosophical act by letting logos, Christ, the maker of the world and fighter against the outlaw angel, spring out of him" (Савић Ребац 2015: 688). Milton is always careful not to depict God as a tyrant who punishes because he deems it just: his words are always the words of the one who has given the possibility of individual reasoning and acting freely to all his creations, and who always has some foreknowledge of what is about to happen; if that were not only foreknowledge but punishment, maybe Satan's rebellion would have a justification (Olofson Thickstun 2007: 37). However, it is interesting to notice that God does nothing to stop Satan from rebelling. Why does he need Satan's rebellion in a way?

So without least impulse or shadow of fate,  
Or aught by me immutably foreseen,  
They trespass, authors to themselves in all,  
Both what they judge and what they choose; for so  
I formed them free, and free they must remain  
Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change  
Their nature, and revoke the high decree  
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained  
Their freedom; they themselves ordained their fall.  
(*P.L.*, III, 120–128)

As the absolute ruler who is above everyone by his nature because he would not deprive the others of their right of freedom of choice even if it were to their detriment, he who sees everything, confirms his power by not succumbing to threatening, like Satan, even when his rule is endangered and leaves everyone to act of their own will. Milton answers the great question

of how God could create evil in the world by applying “the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture interpreted by reason” (McLachlan 1941: 35). In this short speech Milton defines his position – everything that is created is created with the freedom of choice (i.e., everything that has reason), and if that is evil, that is their choice. What happens if they choose evil? That is what God allows to be embodied in Satan’s rebellion. By letting his rule be questioned and then confirmed, the Word of God, his logos, the Son of God remains inviolable, and Satan’s rebellion becomes the confirmation of that word. After the rebellion, evil is placed in Hell, and God has the confirmation of his rightfulness forever. Evil is completely beaten, never to be questioned again. There lies Milton’s theodicy, there lies the cause of Satan’s grandness. In a way, Satan’s darkness is the “light” which is necessary to show in the glow of its falsity the shine of true light. Satan has to be magnificent, he has to be the first among the archangels, because when he as such rebels and is defeated, there is no one else who will have the courage or reason to doubt the word of God. In that sense, Satan is a light bearer, but a light bearer on behalf of God, which his vanity made him unaware of.

Unlike Milton’s epic which starts with the depiction of Satan and his legions in Hell, Njegoš first depicts Satan through God and his faithful archangels.

It is a strange event,  
– Th’Almighty said, continuing his speech –  
That to my court with you did not arrive  
Satan, your equal in high rank and honor.  
You often came together here as dukes  
Of the celestial armies. All the spirits  
Are free indeed, to act as they decide,  
According to the easy and sacred rule.  
(*R. M.*, III, 903–910)

God retains the necessary distance in his speech so as to judge how much other archangels believe in Satan’s rebellion, if they have freely picked Satan’s side or not (Јомпар 2010: 369). Once he discovers that his angels are still loyal to him, that they do not question his rule, he feels wrath because of Satan’s intention and says the following:

What does the fool imagine?  
He fancies the world-holding chain is bound  
To countless columns of bright precious stone,

That in my palace rise to lofty height;  
The chain that holds is the creative word,  
Omnipotent, which fills the space with worlds,  
And each of them with blessed angels bright.  
(*R. M.*, III, 1014–1021)

Unlike Milton's omnipotent God who never loses his temper or shows concern over what might happen (it is only the Son of God that shows concern, who is still unsure of his strength), Njegoš's God shows that there is one part which even he, as the creator cannot control. "The world-holding chain" will not be broken if he is defeated, because it is outside anyone's power, it is the harmony that every chaos gravitates towards and it can never be broken. That is the prime mover, his letter which he himself cannot revoke.<sup>13</sup> There lies an important feature of Njegoš's God. If God were a tyrant, as Satan depicts him when he talks about how he created worlds to fill them with submissive subjects who he could rule over easily, he would not deliberate with archangels waiting to hear their decision made of free will, but he would demand submission. To be on the side of God means to choose consciously, not to blindly follow someone's orders.

Being a very important part of cosmological order, even connected to its purposefulness, he [God] is nothing like an ignorant and inferior usurper who is unconscious of the subordinate rank in the hierarchy of beings and whose world represents the caricature of true divinity. That is why the conception of an evil God is utterly unacceptable for *The Ray of the Microcosm*. (Јомпар 2010: 338)

It has been said that the true validity of Satan's rebellion lies in the justifiability of his pondering the rightfulness of God's primacy. However, if that ponderance is just a forgery, which is beginning to seem more and more likely, what is the cause of his rebellion? A possible answer could be found in the words of God:

That soul with poison nursed, inflamed with envy,  
– So spoke the high Creator to the dukes –  
Will never see the way of truth nor taste  
Eternal bliss.  
(*R. M.*, III, 1006–1009)

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<sup>13</sup> "Neither Kant nor Njegoš believe that matter would evolve into order on its own without the initial intervention of God. They both turn away from those who teach that cosmos was created and put in order by the establishment of incidental connections between atoms" (Slijepčević 1972: 150).

Although it seemed in the beginning that Milton's motivation was more transparent, the same mould is discovered at the bottom of Njegoš's motivation. His Satan is in fever of the same envy as is Milton's. The main difference lies in the fact that envy is aimed directly at God in Njegoš's epic. It could be said that Njegoš more deftly depicts one of the main characteristics of Satan and that is the capability of creating illusions and shaping everything in words in such a way that it becomes the truth. "The path of the truth" is for him the path in which he himself believes, irrespective of whether that is the mimicking or refutation of the truth. The beauty of his lie is such that everyone who is not adamant in his faith may be wavered. However, unlike Milton who leaves no traces of what the characteristics of Satan's legions are, Njegoš speaks of them in a very subtle way, thus showing how right is the cause for which Satan wants to be sacrificed together with his legions.

Now Satan's helpers hurried to assemble  
Around their chief and keep a council there:  
Alzzenk, Ilzhud and haughty Alzavalg,  
Obenizrem and Iaobaz, full of malice;  
They offer to their prince the diadem  
With which their own disaster too they crown –  
So is the doomed army's common will.  
The Evil Prince, with evil crowned, was hailed  
By voices thundering numberless all around; –  
He thanked them all with haughty gratitude.  
(*R. M.*, IV, 1176–1185)

The names of the ones who put the crown on Satan's head are undoubtedly unusual and Milton cannot offer the basis for the understanding of these lines because he does not mention any such likeminded followers. However, a more attentive reader will ask him/herself why one finds similar letters at the beginning of each name ("alz", "ilz" and "alz") and singling out these letters solves the mystery very quickly. "Alzzenk" is the duke of evil, "Ilzhud" is the evil spirit and "Alzavalg" is the evil head. That is the reason why Milton offers no help, because his personages are the real followers of Satan, and in this case, Njegoš wants to tell the reader something quite different. In order to comprehend fully his intention, it is necessary to discover who the last two members of Satan's "coronation entourage" are. A simple palindrome will not help to discover who is hidden under the names of "Obenizrem and Iaobaz", but the fact that the beginning of the first name

is the palindrome of the word “sky” (*nebo*) will surely help in the deciphering of these names. If we skip every third letter and take the fourth for the end of the word while reading backwards, we discover that what is hidden behind these names is the sentence “he evil casts spells and hates the sky” (*zao baje i mrzi nebo*)! What is Njegoš trying to say?

So long as we saw fallen angels in the aforementioned names who joined Satan’s legions, we believed that he was coronated by his faithful subjects who were positive about his victory before the battle itself, who saw him as the rightful ruler. Now we know that Satan, simultaneously as the evil duke, the evil spirit and the evil head, while he evil cast spells and hates the sky, puts alone the crown onto his own head! That crown is “heavy” because he is sentenced by it to the eternal shackles of his own vanity and envy, never to be similar to the archangels once he has become an outlaw. He has become the evil trinity and as such he is the only one who can put the crown on his head. There is no freedom in his kingdom, for the self-proclaimed king is haughty, greedy and vain to such an extent that he will not bow his head, not even to have a crown put on it. He will share the kingdom with God in the darkness, for he has stopped him in his initial intention to abolish completely “the kingdom of darkness” (Петронијевић 1924: 92). Satan has become the “co-ruler of God” through his rebellion even if he loses the battle (Савић Ребац 2015: 660). That is why he rejects the possibility of repentance God offers to him, because he would “strip his rebellion of the foundation and if he loses, he would show that he lacked power, not the truth” (Ломпар 2010: 377). While Satan is putting the crown on his head with the alliterative hissing of his legions in the forms of their names, the readers become aware that the truth of his rebellion is the truth of tyranny. At the same time, another important trace is discovered. If it is overlooked that Satan is coronated before the battle disregarding the outcome, one can easily fail to notice that the accomplishment of the goal is achieved by rebellion itself, which is important for the understanding of the motivation of such an intense feeling as wrath. Why does Njegoš’s God experience such a strong feeling when he knows that “the world-holding chain” cannot be broken by Satan’s rebellion?

It is true that Satan puts crown onto his own head, but his followers are many and they confirm their loyalty to the new ruler – who they believe more in because they are closer to his essence – by hissing. They demonstrate their steadfastness to him and his goals just as the archangels do by staying on God’s side. Tyranny does not exist for them because they do not see it, the new state is freedom for them in which they can create a new kingdom,

even if it is the kingdom of shadow. Therefore, Satan manages to overtake the sacrosanct love for God and to incite it in his legions.

It is precisely the existence of love in the rebelled legions that confirms Satan as the angel of light. Therefore, love is also possible outside *poiesis*, because Satan gives his being to darkness, and to love evil is to love the divine in darkness. [...] God's wrath could have been stirred due to the schism in love: it is no longer only God who is loved, nor only the other because he is in God, but suddenly, someone started being loved because he is the Other by the action of self-freedom. That is how God's state of being undisturbed was changed, since wrath was stirred in him [...]. (Ломпар 2010: 388)

The validity of Satan's rebellion is the darkness which God wanted to put under control of light – that would have been the end of his *poiesis*. Looking for chaos which his rule has established, Satan prevents God from fulfilling his initial intent and darkness remains the constant companion of light. Darkness can never be eliminated and God is aware of that. Is that the reason of God's wrath? Is that why he personally fights Satan, to set his wrath free through righteousness? In order to discover that, one more point must be elucidated and that is the importance of the original sin of man.

### 3. THE ORIGINAL SIN OF MAN

Upon the end of the War in Heaven in which Milton's God sent his Son to confirm God's will and dominion by his victory, Satan and his legion are thrown in the hideous Hell in order to become aware of what they have lost by rebelling. That sense of loss and banishment from home is very important because it is that state that will induce them to make the others fall out of favour so as not to be alone in their exile. Evoking (and travesty) the famous council in which "Odysseus dissuades Agamemnon from giving up the war against Troy", Milton depicts the council of Satan and his "fellow fallen angels" in which they reach an agreement to make the man of Eden sin and eat from the Tree of Knowledge in order to hurt God if possible (Quint 2014: 15). This is a very much founded and not in the least accidental decision: God has instructed that the Earth should be created to make up for the loss caused by Satan's rebellion. Hearing his wish, the Son of God creates the world with people and gives them only one condition – not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge and in doing so, to show their obedience. By making people do precisely that, Satan and his legions would "defeat" once again

the Word of God, showing that it is not strong enough to create something on its own, which would fill the void made by their downfall. That is the persistence of Satan – even when defeated, he keeps on fighting against that state with “his shield [which is] like the moon seen through a telescope, but the moon’s surface is ‘spotty’ [...], a word suggesting blemishes or disease” (Peter 1961: 36).

Unsure of how to make Adam and Eve leave their blissful state, Satan remains hidden and observes them until he finds out the one condition that he could use to his advantage:

Knowledge forbidden?  
Suspicious, reasonless! Why should their Lord  
Envy them that? Can it be sin to know?  
Can it be death? And do they only stand  
By ignorance? Is that their happy state,  
The proof of their obedience and their faith?  
O fair foundation laid whereon to build  
Their ruin!  
(*P.L.*, IV, 521–522)

The entirety of Satan’s accident is reflected in these few lines. In the rebellion, he masked his intentions by saying that God got his primacy over them by keeping them obedient on the grounds of blissful ignorance of how they had actually been created. Without pompous words, Satan reveals the simplicity of his deception, the plainness of his approach based on the fact that whatever is presented as forbidden constitutes the foundation of every wish. What is evident, however, is the alteration in the tone of his speech. Satan will never be a powerful general who will gather legions by the power of his word and make them believe that there is a world of freedom beyond the semblance which is offered to them. He will only degrade into simpler and simpler forms “from hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows [...]” (Lewis 1969: 99) throughout the course of the epic (cf. Waldock 1999: 88).

Milton depicts Adam and Eve as equal, although he does mention that Eve was created due to Adam’s wish and not as the initial intention of God. It is not just the biblical foundation that made him represent woman as the being second in importance, but it was also his openly stated opinion that women, children and madmen should not be left alone and that their freedom



is danger in itself because they can do anything without the supervision of reasonable men (Jordan 2001: 40). Since Milton believed in the sufficiency of the text for an individual interpretation of faith, it could be expected that it was in his reading of the *Bible* that he found the source of such a definition of women. That is why his Eve is presented as a character guided by senses rather than reason and that is why she is the one who errs. Adam is aware of Eve's weakness and he is the one who lets her go to work alone with the following words:

But if thou think trial sought may find  
Us both securer than thus warned thou seem'st.  
Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more.  
Go in thy native innocence; rely  
On what thou hast of virtue; summon all;  
For God towards thee hath done his part: do thine.  
(*P.L.*, IX, 370–375)

Adam almost suggests Eve to go against his wish (Tillyard 1999: 164), and in a way he exposes her to the danger he wants to shelter her from. Satan, once the great general who managed to persuade angels to stand on his side against God, can hardly see this little trick as a great undertaking. Eve is an easy prey of flattery, and “the triviality of her mind is her doom” (Ibid: 220). Yet again, it seems almost too straightforward to ascribe this sin to the triviality and feebleness of mind. That is the reason why the source of Eve's sin will be sought in the deeper analysis of her character.

Watching for the first time the garden of Eden and its happy inhabitants, Satan finds out two important pieces of information. Apart from hearing that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is forbidden to them, he hears something that definitely makes him choose Eve as the victim of his malintent. Namely, telling Adam what she remembered of her being born, Eve mentions that she chanced upon a lake walking out of the cave she was born in and that she thought that its smooth surface was the sky.

As I bent down to look, just opposite,  
A shape within the wat'ry gleam appeared,  
Bending to look on me. I started back,  
It started back; but pleased I soon returned,  
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks  
Of sympathy and love. There I had fixed  
Mine eyes till now, and pined in vain desire,

Had but a voice thus warned me...  
(*P.L.*, IV, 460–467)

The voice solved the mystery for her and said that she saw her own beautiful reflection in the water surface, and then it took her to Adam to have someone who would requite her love. Which story could be recognised in Eve's narrative if not the story of Narcissus who met his death because of his beauty? Satan has found out that Eve is prone to take the words of flattering literally, but that would not be enough to make her eat from the Tree of Knowledge. In her speech, however, she has also discovered the way in which she could be seduced enough to try the fruit. Satan uses the knowledge that Eve is inclined towards finding out and discovering, that she "desires" to know more about everything that is unknown to her, which makes her a perfect prey of his intentions. Knowing that a snake is bound to make her suspicious, he "masks" his body with seductive words and makes Eve overcome the initial amazement and distrust by telling her the story of his extraordinary discovery. It is not just Eve's thoughtlessness that causes her downfall, it is much more her pondering and undogmatic acceptance of everything that is given to her. Who does she resemble in this scene? Defying God's will to blindly follow his orders, whose footsteps does she follow in? Satan clearly says that he would not approach Adam because he is more reasonable and has greater strength than Eve, but below that, there is yet another reason, and that is the similarity that he discovered when he heard about Eve's obsession with herself – the same one he had when he believed that he was greater than all the other archangels and that he had the right not to submit to God's will. He spotted the seed of the same self-centredness in the scene in which she gazed at her own reflection lovingly and waited for it to requite her love and attention. And just like Narcissus, she met her death precisely at that lake without even knowing it. In a way, Satan in her, and consequently in Adam, illuminates all the sides of them which can betray them, thus indicating their weaknesses. Falling from Eden in all the light of their true beings, Adam and Eve fall into Hell where they will become aware of everything they have lost. That is the knowledge they have discovered the taste of.

The water surface that was Eve's metaphorical death has turned into a mirror in *The Ray of the Microcosm* in which Njegoš's traveller<sup>14</sup> will

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<sup>14</sup> The illuminated subject, the poet, as the only intermediary between God and people (Branković 1936: 28).

see “everything that happened in eternity”, after he has taken a sip of it (Стојановић 1940: 110). However, the greatest rupture between these two epics is about to come. The members of Satan’s army have already been mentioned, but one name has not been mentioned yet.

Here’s Adam, Noelopan, Rasets too,  
And Askela, to hail the foe of heaven.  
They swear to be a faithful crew to him,  
If only he’s to keep the word he gave –  
To crown them all with independent power  
And sovereign rights complete over a world –  
Ambitious race, how dearly thou shalt pay!  
(*R. M.*, IV, 1185–1192)

Njegoš’s Adam sinned significantly before Eve, but what is the cause of that? The names of the people hidden behind the palindromes are Napoleon, Caesar and Alexander the Great. The personages that follow Satan and hail him once he has put the crown onto his head are the ones who wanted all the power for themselves. Satan has managed to win them over to his side by promising the sovereignty to each of them. Therefore, even before Eve has eaten the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, a haughty thought appeared in Adam’s head that he had the right to take a share of God’s rule for himself. Greed and vainglory preoccupied his mind and he joined Satan. What Satan illuminates in Njegoš’s epic is precisely the same as in Milton’s – Satan discovers the hidden dark corners of everyone in which are the wishes suspended because of God’s rule and uses it for his own ends.

The only reason why Adam does not fall into Hell together with Satan and his legions is because he repents in the middle of the battle. He realises his mistake and tells the other dukes about his dream in which he saw what destiny awaited all of them if they did not repent. His regiment pronounces him a traitor, and they leave the battlefield bereft of hope. However, his repentance cannot be seen as genuine because he has retreated from the battle only because he was afraid of retaliation and that is the reason why the Earth had to be created for humankind to truly expiate their sin. It is only then that they will be able to return to their former glorious state. The fact that Eve sins for the second time on Earth shows that the wish for ruling and knowing more than it is acceptable is still alive in people. Eve’s downfall is only the confirmation of the fact that people are not ready to return to their Creator in all the beauty and splendour from which they originated.

Njegoš's wrathful God is dislocated from the state of necessity and his primacy is called into question. His wrath is characterised as the "rightful wrath". However, since he does not get redemption from Satan, he tones down and transforms his wrath by punishing everyone as much as they deserved. Knowing that people sin for the second time even after that punishment, it might seem that punishment itself is not enough to show the right road which needs to be taken to get back to the light of God. That answer was something that God learned from Satan's rebellion.

One cannot go back or proceed into another rule (necessity) from the freedom-from-God: that was Satan's delusion. However, this self-freedom must be exited, even Satan yearned to "all being give another rule" (IV, 53), and the only road from there is the one of kindness: that is what God learned from Satan's rebellion. That is the origin of Christ. (Ломнап 2010: 415–416)

The Son of God with his silent mildness and kindness is the spring from which the traveller must drink in order to reach his ray, to finally come back to his Creator in light. Just like in Milton's epic, Satan is the quintessential part of the chain which leads towards general peace, he is the one who establishes order in the darkness and once he shines, he has the quality of a touchstone which immediately determines who belongs where. Satan's rebellion was necessary as the final confirmation of God's rule: from its negativity, it makes full circle and at the end of that circle is Christ as the answer to the question of self-freedom. "God is a creator-poet" (Sekulić 1972: 124) and his final creation is left as guidance for the whole of universe about the direction it should take. Following his example and listening to his voice, people shall ascend with the immortal part of themselves back to Heaven and Satan's darkness will remain forever sentenced to disappear in its own self-freedom.

#### **4. THE AFTERMATH**

Whereas Milton depicts the destiny of Satan after he has made Eve eat from the Tree of Knowledge very vividly and shows that his legions await and hail him hissing while simultaneously turning into snakes, Njegoš does not say anything about how Satan's legions greet him. For his Satan, the most important part of his role has already been played and he will continue to act as such looming from the shadows, although he will never be able to

harm God's order again. In that sense, Isidora Sekulić (1972: 124) was right in saying that Satan was the “embodiment of struggle in creative processes”. It is at this point that the differences between these two epics become the most conspicuous and they lie in the different conditions in which they were created.

In the world where the goal for which he fought turned first into the shadow and then into the opposite of what it had been, Milton had to find the solution of the perplexing mystery – the enigmatic imploding of the idea of the Republic whose ardent proponent he himself was. He discovered the predetermination in the heard of human being on that path, and he exhibited it in the epic full of pessimism (Tillyard 1966: 241). However, he believed in the individual ability to build one's own faith irrespective of church doctrine – that is why his Abdiel can recognise the truth in the whirlpool of the general approval and discern it from its semblance. Such is Milton's heroism displayed in the moments of the crumbling of the Commonwealth (Bush 1999: 113). Milton does not see the England of his time as the country whose nation is prepared to look the great rebel in the eye and to reject his so-called gifts. His victory prevents people from returning to heaven and their state is final. Although they have a trace of their former being in themselves, they are aware that they can never return to the former blissful state – that is what makes this epic so sombre.

The war between God and Satan had been only a macrocosmic illustration of, and background for, Milton's real theme, the war between good and evil in the soul of man; and while Satan had been defeated in heaven he is to be victorious on earth. (Bush 1999: 120)

Surrounded by the immortal mountains which stand despite the bites of the sea, winters and storms, what could Prince Bishop believe in if not in the eternal perseverance in battle? He begins his epic by saying that something similar to the voice of an angel speaks to the lyrical subject from the violent turmoil of night and from that moment he starts his journey of ascension and casting off of the bodily gyve in order to see the reason for his downfall. It reveals to him that it is actually his ray,<sup>15</sup> the idea which stemmed from the same core and that it is taking him to it. It is only now that the title of the epic

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<sup>15</sup> “The main characteristic of Plato's teaching is [...] the division of soul into two parts, i.e., the differentiation of the immortal part located in brain and the mortal part which was created by ‘lower gods’ and which is not rational but only sensual. God entrusted lower gods with the creation of man after he had taken the remains of ‘the soul of the world’ and

becomes completely clear. Bodily gyve by which man is bound to the earth is the dungeon for his immortal soul which can ascend only after he becomes fully aware of his sin. That is why this life is actually not life, it is just its imitation, because what people experience is merely a punishment through which they can purge themselves of sin and become worthy of returning to heaven, for that is where they belong. People are still prone to believing in Satan's flattering words, but that should not be the cause of despair according to Njegoš. He sees the way out – he follows the trace of the ray that keeps vigil over him and with perseverance, kindness and the acceptance of everything that this world is in exchange for what is promised to await him, Njegoš knows that this world can be left so that man could finally return to what life truly is, and not just a mere shadow of what it represents. That is why Njegoš's Satan, so grandiose in his rebellion, disappears after the final word of God and stealthily tries to renew his alliance with man: his destiny is final, his zenith was at the moment of the rebellion and after that he would never be able to ascend to those heights. Hell is his ultimate destination, while the Earth is just a temporary punishment for people.

The greatest role that Satan played in both epics is the one he was not even aware of. Both in Milton's and in Njegoš's epic, Satan is merely a necessary part in the chain of the justification of God's rule which he wanted to call into question on the grounds of his vanity. Milton's God says that the damage caused by Satan's rebellion is not damage at all because it has just shown to him who the true believers are – Satan is some kind of purgatory in which everyone must see themselves for what they really are and decide where they belong. In the same way, Njegoš's Satan attracts only the ones who share some qualities with him, the ones who are innately similar to him. There is no evil without, there is no fight beyond the limits of the self. Human bodies are unaware of the fact that freedom is in mind – freedom which awaits the end in goodness, which patiently defies evil – that it is possible to set free from the shackles of tyranny only in peaceful "rebellion". It is only after setting themselves free that people will confirm that they have purged themselves of the original sin and that they are ready to come back to heaven. Satan will again be merely a toll of proving it – by relieving themselves of evil, people will go back to their former state.

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created individual souls from that, adding a part of heavenly being and deciding on their destinies" (Флашар 1997: 114–115).

That is the light that Satan's darkness obstructs. His darkness is the shadow outlining the light of God, not allowing anything to question it. Satan might be the most tragic figure a human mind has ever depicted.

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Данијела С. Митровић

### МИЛТОНОВ И ЊЕГОШЕВ САТАНА: НОСИЛАЦ ТАМЕ?

**Резиме:** У времену у којем се чини да је свако питање о Божјој речи излишно јер је ово време одавно прегазило питање и самог Божијег постојања, окретање ка спевовима који се баве питањима људских почетака може се чинити готово непотребним. Наука је већ



рекла своје, зар је књижевности потребно придавати неког већег значаја? Можда је занимљиво ова дела прочитати, али свакако да у њима нећемо открити ништа што ће значајније утицати на наше животне назоре. То поглавље је одавно затворено и ми данас са рубова скептицизма са зазором гледамо на све што се чини тако страним и одељеним. У доба напредне технологије, да ли је заиста битно бавити се спевовима попут *Изгубљеног раја* и *Луче микрокозма*?

Моја знатижеља била је покренута управо овом премисом. Да ли заиста знамо све или из своје несрећне незапитаности прихватамо једно тумачење и њему се повинујемо? Ово ме је питање одвело даље ка ова спева јер ми се та истинска догматичност учинила симптоматичном за наш свет. Ко се више питао ако не Сатана? Ако се само питао, како је онда могуће да је окарактерисан као негативан и остављен у вечном Паклу?

Чињеница да су се два писца тако значајна у својим традицијма бавила овим питањем покренула ме је на дубље истраживање ове тематике. Да ли је праведно Сатанин циљ од само почетка окарактерисати као негативан и тиме му одрећи баш свако право на побуну? Овим радом се указује на два виђења овог питања како су представљена у спевовима *Изгубљени рај* и *Луча микрокозма*.

**Кључне речи:** Сатана, Сатанина побуна, Бог, реч Божија, људски пад.