

## Samson Agonistes John Milton (1671)

### THE ARGUMENT

*SAMSON made Captive, Blind, and now in the Prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common work-house, on a Festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open Air, to a place nigh, somewhat retir'd there to sit a while and bemoan his condition. Where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old Father Manoa, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this Feast was proclaim'd by the Philistins as a day of Thanksgiving for thir deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoa then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistian Lords for Samson's redemption; who in the mean while is visited by other persons; and lastly by a publick Officer to require his coming to the Feast before the Lords and People, to play or shew his strength in thir presence; he at first refuses, dismissing the publick Officer with absolute denial to come; at length perswaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatnings to fetch him; the Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoareturns full of joyful hope, to procure e're long his Sons deliverance: in the midst of which discourse an Ebrew comes in haste confusedly at first; and afterward more distinctly relating the Catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistins, and by accident to himself; wherewith the Tragedy ends.*

### The Persons.

Samson  
Manoa *the Father of Samson*  
Dalila *his Wife*  
Harapha *of Gath*  
Publick Officer  
Messenger  
Chorus *of Danites*

### *The Scene before the Prison in Gaza*

*Sams.*

**A** Little onward lend thy guiding hand  
To these dark steps, a little further on;  
For yonder bank hath choice of Sun or shade,  
There I am wont to sit, when any chance  
Relieves me from my task of servile toyl, [ 5 ]  
Daily in the common Prison else enjoyn'd me,  
Where I a Prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw

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Attributed to: [Laura Ferrell and Thomas H. Luxon]



The air imprison'd also, close and damp,  
 Unwholsom draught: but here I feel amends,  
 The breath of Heav'n fresh-blowing, pure and sweet, [ 10 ]  
 With day-spring born; here leave me to respire.  
 This day a solemn Feast the people hold  
 To *Dagon* thir Sea-Idol, and forbid  
 Laborious works, unwillingly this rest  
 Thir Superstition yields me; hence with leave [ 15 ]  
 Retiring from the popular noise, I seek  
 This unfrequented place to find some ease,  
 Ease to the body some, none to the mind  
 From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm  
 Of Hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone, [ 20 ]  
 But rush upon me thronging, and present  
 Times past, what once I was, and what am now.  
 O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold  
 Twice by an Angel, who at last in sight  
 Of both my Parents all in flames ascended [ 25 ]  
 From off the Altar, where an Off'ring burn'd,  
 As in a fiery column charioting  
 His Godlike presence, and from some great act  
 Or benefit reveal'd to *Abraham's* race?  
 Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd [ 30 ]  
 As of a person separate to God,  
 Design'd for great exploits; if I must dye  
 Betray'd, Captiv'd, and both my Eyes put out,  
 Made of my Enemies the scorn and gaze;  
 To grind in Brazen Fetters under task [ 35 ]  
 With this Heav'n-gifted strength? O glorious strength  
 Put to the labour of a Beast, debas't  
 Lower then bondslave! Promise was that I  
 Should *Israel* from *Philistian* yoke deliver;  
 Ask for this great Deliverer now, and find him [ 40 ]  
 Eyeless in *Gaza* at the Mill with slaves,  
 Himself in bonds under *Philistian* yoke;  
 Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt  
 Divine Prediction; what if all foretold  
 Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default, [ 45 ]  
 Whom have I to complain of but my self?  
 Who this high gift of strength committed to me,  
 In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,  
 Under the Seal of silence could not keep,  
 But weakly to a woman must reveal it, [ 50 ]  
 O'come with importunity and tears.  
 O impotence of mind, in body strong!

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But what is strength without a double share  
 Of wisdom, vast, unwieldy, burdensom,  
 Proudly secure, yet liable to fall [ 55 ]  
 By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,  
 But to subserve where wisdom bears command.  
 God, when he gave me strength, to shew withal  
 How slight the gift was, hung it in my Hair.  
 But peace, I must not quarrel with the will [ 60 ]  
 Of highest dispensation, which herein  
 Happ'ly had ends above my reach to know:  
 Suffices that to me strength is my bane,  
 And proves the source of all my miseries;  
 So many, and so huge, that each apart [ 65 ]  
 Would ask a life to wail, but chief of all,  
 O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!  
 Blind among enemies, O worse then chains,  
 Dungeon, or beggery, or decrepit age!  
 Light the prime work of God to me is extinct, [ 70 ]  
 And all her various objects of delight  
 Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,  
 Inferiour to the vilest now become  
 Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,  
 They creep, yet see, I dark in light expos'd [ 75 ]  
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong,  
 Within doors, or without, still as a fool,  
 In power of others, never in my own;  
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more then half.  
 O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon, [ 80 ]  
 Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse  
 Without all hope of day!  
 O first created Beam, and thou great Word,  
 Let there be light, and light was over all;  
 Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree? [ 85 ]  
 The Sun to me is dark  
 And silent as the Moon,  
 When she deserts the night  
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.  
 Since light so necessary is to life, [ 90 ]  
 And almost life itself, if it be true  
 That light is in the Soul,  
 She all in every part; why was the sight  
 To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd?  
 So obvious and so easie to be quench't, [ 95 ]  
 And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,  
 That she might look at will through every pore?

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Then had I not been thus exil'd from light;  
 As in the land of darkness yet in light,  
 To live a life half dead, a living death, [ 100 ]  
 And buried; but O yet more miserable!  
 My self, my Sepulcher, a moving Grave,  
 Buried, yet not exempt  
 By priviledge of death and burial  
 From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs, [ 105 ]  
 But made hereby obnoxious more  
 To all the miseries of life,  
 Life in captivity  
 Among inhuman foes.  
 But who are these? for with joint pace I hear [ 110 ]  
 The tread of many feet steering this way;  
 Perhaps my enemies who come to stare  
 At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,  
 Thir daily practice to afflict me more.  
     Chor. This, this is he; softly a while, [ 115 ]  
 Let us not break in upon him;  
 O change beyond report, thought, or belief!  
 See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,  
 With languish't head unpropt,  
 As one past hope, abandon'd, [ 120 ]  
 And by himself given over;  
 In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds  
 O're worn and soil'd;  
 Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be hee,  
 That Heroic, that Renown'd, [ 125 ]  
 Irresistible *Samson*? whom unarm'd  
 No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could withstand;  
 Who tore the Lion, as the Lion tears the Kid,  
 Ran on embattelld Armies clad in Iron,  
 And weaponless himself, [ 130 ]  
 Made Arms ridiculous, useless the forgery  
 Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd Cuirass,  
Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail  
Adamantean Proof;  
 But safest he who stood aloof, [ 135 ]  
 When insupportably his foot advanc't,  
 In scorn of thir proud arms and warlike tools,  
 Spurn'd them to death by Troops. The bold Ascalonite  
 Fled from his Lion ramp, old Warriors turn'd  
 Thir plated backs under his heel; [ 140 ]  
 Or grovling soild thir crested helmets in the dust.  
 Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,

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The Jaw of a dead Ass, his sword of bone,  
 A thousand fore-skins fell, the flower of *Palestin*  
 In *Ramath-lechi* famous to this day: [ 145 ]  
 Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders bore  
 The Gates of *Azza*, Post, and massie Bar  
 Up to the Hill by *Hebron*, seat of Giants old,  
 No journey of a Sabbath day, and loaded so;  
 Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav'n. [ 150 ]  
 Which shall I first bewail,  
 Thy Bondage or lost Sight,  
 Prison within Prison  
 Inseparably dark?  
 Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!) [ 155 ]  
 The Dungeon of thy self; thy Soul  
 (Which Men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)  
 Imprison'd now indeed,  
 In real darkness of the body dwells,  
 Shut up from outward light [ 160 ]  
 To incorporate with gloomy night;  
 For inward light alas  
 Puts forth no visual beam.  
 O mirror of our fickle state,  
 Since man on earth unparallel'd! [ 165 ]  
 The rarer thy example stands,  
 By how much from the top of wondrous glory,  
 Strongest of mortal men,  
 To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n.  
 For him I reckon not in high estate [ 170 ]  
 Whom long descent of birth  
 Or the spear of fortune raises;  
 But thee whose strength, while vertue was her mate  
 Might have subdu'd the Earth,  
 Universally crown'd with highest praises. [ 175 ]  
*Sam.* I hear the sound of words, thir sense the air  
 Dissolves unjointed e're it reach my ear.  
*Chor.* Hee speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,  
 The glory late of *Israel*, now the grief;  
 We come thy friends and neighbours not unknown [ 180 ]  
 From *Eshtaol* and *Zora's* fruitful Vale  
 To visit or bewail thee, or if better,  
 Counsel or Consolation we may bring,  
 Salve to thy Sores, apt words have power to swage  
 The tumors of a troubl'd mind, [ 185 ]  
 And are as Balm to fester'd wounds.

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*Sam.* Your coming, Friends, revives me, for I learn  
 Now of my own experience, not by talk,  
 How counterfeit a coin they are who friends  
 Bear in their Superscription (of the most [ 190 ]  
 I would be understood) in prosperous days  
 They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head  
 Not to be found, though sought. Yee see, O friends,  
 How many evils have enclos'd me round;  
 Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me, [ 195 ]  
 Blindness, for had I sight, confus'd with shame,  
 How could I once look up, or heave the head,  
 Who like a foolish Pilot have shipwrack't,  
 My Vessel trusted to me from above,  
 Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear, [ 200 ]  
 Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of God  
 To a deceitful Woman: tell me Friends,  
 Am I not sung and proverb'd for a Fool  
 In every street, do they not say, how well  
 Are come upon him his deserts? yet why? [ 205 ]  
 Immeasurable strength they might behold  
 In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean;  
 This with the other should, at least, have pair'd,  
 These two proportion'd ill drove me transverse.

*Chor.* Tax not divine disposal, wisest Men [ 210 ]  
 Have err'd, and by bad Women been deceiv'd;  
 And shall again, pretend they ne're so wise.  
 Deject not so overmuch thy self,  
 Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides;  
 Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder [ 215 ]  
 Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather  
 Than of thine own Tribe fairer, or as fair,  
 At least of thy own Nation, and as noble.

*Sam.* The first I saw at Timna, and she pleas'd  
 Mee, not my Parents, that I sought to wed, [ 220 ]  
 The daughter of an Infidel: they knew not  
 That what I motion'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, [ 225 ]  
 The work to which I was divinely call'd;  
 She proving false, the next I took to Wife  
 (O that I never had! fond wish too late.)  
 Was in the Vale of *Sorec*, *Dalila*,  
 That specious Monster, my accomplisht snare. [ 230 ]  
 I thought it lawful from my former act,

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And the same end; still watching to oppress  
*Israel's* oppressours: of what now I suffer  
She was not the prime cause, but I my self,  
Who vanquisht with a peal of words (O weakness!) [ 235 ]  
Gave up my fort of silence to a Woman.

*Chor.* In seeking just occasion to provoke  
The *Philistine*, thy Countries Enemy,  
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness:  
Yet *Israel* still serves with all his Sons. [ 240 ]

*Sam.* That fault I take not on me, but transfer  
On *Israel's* Governours, and Heads of Tribes,  
Who seeing those great acts which God had done  
Singly by me against their Conquerours  
Acknowledg'd not, or not at all consider'd [ 245 ]  
Deliverance offer'd: I on th' other side  
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,  
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer;  
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem  
To count them things worth notice, till at length [ 250 ]  
Thir Lords the *Philistines* with gather'd powers  
Enter'd *Judea* seeking mee, who then  
Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd,  
Not flying, but fore-casting in what place  
To set upon them, what advantag'd best; [ 255 ]  
Mean while the men of *Judah* to prevent  
The harrass of thir Land, beset me round;  
I willingly on some conditions came  
Into thir hands, and they as gladly yield me  
To the uncircumcis'd a welcom prey, [ 260 ]  
Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threds  
Toucht with the flame: on thir whole Host I flew  
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd  
Thir choicest youth; they only liv'd who fled.  
Had *Judah* that day join'd, or one whole Tribe, [ 265 ]  
They had by this possess'd the Towers of *Gath*,  
And lorded over them whom now they serve;  
But what more oft in Nations grown corrupt,  
And by thir vices brought to servitude,  
Then to love Bondage more then Liberty, [ 270 ]  
Bondage with ease then strenuous liberty;  
And to despise, or envy, or suspect  
Whom God hath of his special Favour rais'd  
As thir Deliverer; if he aught begin,  
How frequent to desert him, and at last [ 275 ]  
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?

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*Chor.* Thy words to my remembrance bring  
How Succoth and the Fort of Penuel  
Thir great Deliverer contemn'd,  
The matchless *Gideon* in pursuit [ 280 ]  
Of *Madian* and her vanquisht Kings:  
And how ingrateful Ephraim  
Had dealt with *Jephtha*, who by argument,  
Not worse then by his shield and spear  
Defended *Israel* from the *Ammonite*, [ 285 ]  
Had not his prowess quell'd thir pride  
In that sore battel when so many dy'd  
Without Reprieve adjudg'd to death,  
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.

*Sam.* Of such examples add mee to the roule, [ 290 ]  
Mee easily indeed mine may neglect,  
But Gods propos'd deliverance not so.

*Chor.* Just are the ways of God,  
And justifiable to Men;  
Unless there be who think not God at all, [ 295 ]  
If any be, they walk obscure;  
For of such Doctrine never was there School,  
But the heart of the Fool,  
And no man therein Doctor but himself.

Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just, [ 300 ]  
As to his own edicts, found contradicting,  
Then give the rains to wandring thought,  
Regardless of his glories diminution;  
Till by thir own perplexities involv'd  
They ravel more, still less resolv'd, [ 305 ]  
But never find self-satisfying solution.

As if they would confine th' interminable,  
And tie him to his own prescript,  
Who made our Laws to bind us, not himself,  
And hath full right to exempt [ 310 ]  
Whom so it pleases him by choice  
From National obstruction, without taint  
Of sin, or legal debt;  
For with his own Laws he can best dispence.

He would not else who never wanted means, [ 315 ]  
Nor in respect of the enemy just cause  
To set his people free,  
Have prompted this Heroic *Nazarite*,  
Against his vow of strictest purity,  
To seek in marriage that fallacious Bride, [ 320 ]  
Unclean, unchaste.



Down Reason then, at least vain reasonings down,  
Though Reason here aver  
That moral verdict quits her of unclean:  
Unchaste was subsequent, her stain not his. [ 325 ]

But see here comes thy reverend Sire  
With careful step, Locks white as doune,  
Old *Manoa*: advise  
Forthwith how thou oughtst to receive him.

*Sam.* Ay me, another inward grief awak'd, [ 330 ]  
With mention of that name renews th' assault.

*Man.* Brethren and men of *Dan*, for such ye seem,  
Though in this uncouth place; if old respect,  
As I suppose, towards your once gloried friend,  
My Son now Captive, hither hath inform'd [ 335 ]  
Your younger feet, while mine cast back with age  
Came lagging after; say if he be here.

*Chor.* As signal now in low dejected state,  
As earst in highest, behold him where he lies.

*Man.* O miserable change! is this the man, [ 340 ]  
That invincible *Samson*, far renown'd,  
The dread of *Israel's* foes, who with a strength  
Equivalent to Angels walk'd thir streets,  
None offering fight; who single combatant  
Duell'd thir Armies rank't in proud array, [ 345 ]  
Himself an Army, now unequal match  
To save himself against a coward arm'd  
At one spears length. O ever failing trust  
In mortal strength! and oh what not in man  
Deceivable and vain! Nay what thing good [ 350 ]  
Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane?  
I pray'd for Children, and thought barrenness  
In wedlock a reproach; I gain'd a Son,  
And such a Son as all Men hail'd me happy;  
Who would be now a Father in my stead? [ 355 ]  
O wherefore did God grant me my request,  
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd?  
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt  
Our earnest Prayers, then giv'n with solemn hand  
As Graces, draw a Scorpions tail behind? [ 360 ]  
For this did the Angel twice descend? for this  
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a Plant;  
Select, and Sacred, Glorious for a while,  
The miracle of men: then in an hour  
Ensnar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound, [ 365 ]  
Thy Foes derision, Captive, Poor, and Blind

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Into a Dungeon thrust, to work with Slaves?  
Alas methinks whom God hath chosen once  
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,  
He should not so o'whelm, and as a thrall [ 370 ]  
Subject him to so foul indignities,  
Be it but for honours sake of former deeds.

*Sam.* Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father,  
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me  
But justly; I my self have brought them on, [ 375 ]  
Sole Author I, sole cause: if aught seem vile,  
As vile hath been my folly, who have profan'd  
The mystery of God givn me under pledge  
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,  
*A Canaanite*, my faithless enemy. [ 380 ]  
This well I knew, nor was at all surpris'd,  
But warn'd by oft experience: did not she  
Of *Timna* first betray me, and reveal  
The secret wrested from me in her highth  
Of Nuptial Love profest, carrying it strait [ 385 ]  
To them who had corrupted her, my Spies,  
And Rivals? In this other was there found  
More Faith? who also in her prime of love,  
Spousal embraces, vitiated with Gold,  
Though offer'd only, by the sent conceiv'd [ 390 ]  
Her spurious first-born; Treason against me?  
Thrice she assay'd with flattering prayers and sighs,  
And amorous reproaches to win from me  
My capital secret, in what part my strength  
Lay stor'd, in what part summ'd, that she might know: [ 395 ]  
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport  
Her importunity, each time perceiving  
How openly, and with what impudence  
She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was worse  
Then undissembl'd hate) with what contempt [ 400 ]  
She sought to make me Traytor to my self;  
Yet the fourth time, when mustering all her wiles,  
With blandisht parlies, feminine assaults,  
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night  
To storm me over-watch't, and wearied out. [ 405 ]  
At times when men seek most repose and rest,  
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,  
Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd  
Might easily have shook off all her snares:  
But foul effeminacy held me yok't [ 410 ]  
Her Bond-slave; O indignity, O blot

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To Honour and Religion! servil mind  
Rewarded well with servil punishment!  
The base degree to which I now am fall'n,  
These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base [ 415 ]  
As was my former servitude, ignoble,  
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,  
True slavery, and that blindness worse then this,  
That saw not how degeneratly I serv'd.

*Man.* I cannot praise thy Marriage choises, Son, [ 420 ]  
Rather approv'd them not; but thou didst plead  
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st  
Find some occasion to infest our Foes.  
I state not that; this I am sure; our Foes  
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee [ 425 ]  
Thir Captive, and thir triumph; thou the sooner  
Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms  
To violate the sacred trust of silence  
Deposited within thee; which to have kept  
Tacit, was in thy power; true; and thou bear'st [ 430 ]  
Enough, and more the burden of that fault;  
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying  
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains,  
This day the *Philistines* a popular Feast  
Here celebrate in *Gaza*; and proclaim [ 435 ]  
Great Pomp, and Sacrifice, and Praises loud  
To *Dagon*, as their God who hath deliver'd  
Thee *Samson* bound and blind into thir hands,  
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.  
So *Dagon* shall be magnifi'd, and God, [ 440 ]  
Besides whom is no God, compar'd with Idols,  
Disglorifi'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn  
By th' Idolatrous rout amidst thir wine;  
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,  
*Samson*, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest, [ 445 ]  
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever  
Could have befall'n thee and thy Fathers house.

*Sam.* Father, I do acknowledge and confess  
That I this honour, I this pomp have brought  
To *Dagon*, and advanc'd his praises high [ 450 ]  
Among the Heathen round; to God have brought  
Dishonour, obloquie, and op't the mouths  
Of Idolists, and Atheists; have brought scandal  
To *Israel*, diffidence of God, and doubt  
In feeble hearts, propense anough before [ 455 ]  
To waver, or fall off and join with Idols;

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Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,  
The anguish of my Soul, that suffers not  
Mine eie to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.  
This only hope relieves me, that the strife [ 460 ]  
With me hath end; all the contest is now  
Twixt God and *Dagon*; *Dagon* hath presum'd,  
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,  
His Deity comparing and preferring  
Before the God of *Abraham*. He, be sure, [ 465 ]  
Will not connive, or linger, thus provok'd,  
But will arise and his great name assert:  
*Dagon* must stoop, and shall e're long receive  
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him  
Of all these boasted Trophies won on me, [ 470 ]  
And with confusion blank his Worshippers.

*Man*. With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words  
I as a Prophecy receive: for God,  
Nothing more certain, will not long defer  
To vindicate the glory of his name [ 475 ]  
Against all competition, nor will long  
Endure it, doubtful whether God be Lord,  
Or *Dagon*. But for thee what shall be done?  
Thou must not in the mean while here forgot  
Lie in this miserable loathsom plight [ 480 ]  
Neglected. I already have made way  
To some *Philistian* Lords, with whom to treat  
About thy ransom: well they may by this  
Have satisfi'd thir utmost of revenge  
By pains and slaveries, worse then death inflicted [ 485 ]  
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.

*Sam*. Spare that proposal, Father, spare the trouble  
Of that sollicitation; let me here,  
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;  
And expiate, if possible, my crime, [ 490 ]  
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd  
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,  
How heinous had the fact been, how deserving  
Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded  
All friendship, and avoided as a blab, [ 495 ]  
The mark of fool set on his front?  
But I Gods counsel have not kept, his holy secret  
Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously,  
Weakly at least, and shamefully: A sin  
That Gentiles in thir Parables condemn [ 500 ]  
To thir abyss and horrid pains confin'd.

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*Man.* Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,  
But act not in thy own affliction, Son,  
Repent the sin, but if the punishment  
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids; [ 505 ]  
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,  
And let another hand, not thine, exact  
Thy penal forfeit from thy self; perhaps  
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;  
Who evermore approves and more accepts [ 510 ]  
(Best pleas'd with humble and filial submission)  
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,  
Then who self-rigorous chooses death as due;  
Which argues over-just, and self-displeas'd  
For self-offence, more then for God offended. [ 515 ]  
Reject not then what offerd means, who knows  
But God hath set before us, to return thee  
Home to thy country and his sacred house,  
Where thou may'st bring thy off'rings, to avert  
His further ire, with praiers and vows renew'd. [ 520 ]

*Sam.* His pardon I implore; but as for life,  
To what end should I seek it? when in strength  
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes  
With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts  
Of birth from Heav'n foretold and high exploits, [ 525 ]  
Full of divine instinct, after some proof  
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond  
The Sons of Anac, famous now and blaz'd,  
Fearless of danger, like a petty God  
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded [ 530 ]  
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.  
Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell  
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,  
Softn'd with pleasure and voluptuous life;  
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge [ 535 ]  
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap  
Of a deceitful Concubine who shore me  
Like a tame Weather, all my precious fleece,  
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,  
Shav'n, and disarm'd among my enemies. [ 540 ]

*Chor.* Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,  
Which many a famous Warriour overturns,  
Thou could'st repress, nor did the dancing Rubie  
Sparkling, out-pow'rd, the flavor, or the smell,  
Or taste that cheers the heart of Gods and men, [ 545 ]  
Allure thee from the cool Crystalline stream.

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*Sam.* Where ever fountain or fresh current flow'd  
Against the Eastern ray, translucent, pure,  
With touch ætherial of Heav'ns fiery rod  
I drank, from the clear milkie juice allaying [ 550 ]  
Thirst, and refresht; nor envy'd them the grape  
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.

*Chor.* O madness, to think use of strongest wines  
And strongest drinks our chief support of health,  
When God with these forbid'n made choice to rear [ 555 ]  
His mighty Champion, strong above compare,  
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.

*Sam.* But what avail'd this temperance, not compleat  
Against another object more enticing?  
What boots it at one gate to make defence, [ 560 ]  
And at another to let in the foe  
Effeminatly vanquish't? by which means,  
Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dishonour'd, quell'd,  
To what can I be useful, wherein serve  
My Nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd, [ 565 ]  
But to sit idle on the household hearth,  
A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,  
Or pitied object, these redundant locks  
Robustious to no purpose clustring down,  
Vain monument of strength; till length of years [ 570 ]  
And sedentary numness craze my limbs  
To a contemptible old age obscure.  
Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread,  
Till vermin or the draff of servil food  
Consume me, and oft-invocated death [ 575 ]  
Hast'n the welcom end of all my pains.

*Man.* Wilt thou then serve the *Philistines* with that gift  
Which was expressly giv'n thee to annoy them?  
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,  
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age out-worn. [ 580 ]  
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer  
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to allay  
After the brunt of battel, can as easie  
Cause light again within thy eies to spring,  
Wherewith to serve him better then thou hast; [ 585 ]  
And I perswade me so; why else this strength  
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?  
His might continues in thee not for naught,  
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

*Sam.* All otherwise to me my thoughts portend, [ 590 ]  
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,

Nor th' other light of life continue long,  
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:  
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,  
My hopes all flat, nature within me seems [ 595 ]  
In all her functions weary of her self;  
My race of glory run, and race of shame,  
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

*Man.* Believe not these suggestions which proceed  
From anguish of the mind and humours black, [ 600 ]  
That mingle with thy fancy. I however  
Must not omit a Fathers timely care  
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance  
By ransom or how else: mean while be calm,  
And healing words from these thy friends admit. [ 605 ]

*Sam.* O that torment should not be confin'd  
To the bodies wounds and sores  
With maladies innumerable  
In heart, head, brest, and reins;  
But must secret passage find [ 610 ]  
To th' inmost mind,  
There exercise all his fierce accidents,  
And on her purest spirits prey,  
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,  
With answerable pains, but more intense, [ 615 ]  
Though void of corporal sense.

My griefs not only pain me  
As a lingring disease,  
But finding no redress, ferment and rage,  
Nor less then wounds immedicable [ 620 ]  
Ranckle, and fester, and gangrene,  
To black mortification.  
Thoughts my Tormenters arm'd with deadly stings  
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,  
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise [ 625 ]  
Dire inflammation which no cooling herb  
Or medicinal liquor can asswage,  
Nor breath of Vernal Air from snowy Alp.  
Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o're  
To deaths benumbing Opium as my only cure. [ 630 ]  
Thence faintings, swounings of despair,  
And sense of Heav'ns desertion.

I was his nursling once and choice delight,  
His destin'd from the womb,  
Promisd by Heavenly message twice descending. [ 635 ]  
Under his special eie

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Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain;  
He led me on to mightiest deeds  
Above the nerve of mortal arm  
Against the uncircumcis'd, our enemies. [ 640 ]  
But now hath cast me off as never known,  
And to those cruel enemies,  
Whom I by his appointment had provok't,  
Left me all helpless with th' irreparable loss  
Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated [ 645 ]  
The subject of thir cruelty, or scorn.  
Nor am I in the list of them that hope;  
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless;  
This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,  
No long petition, speedy death, [ 650 ]  
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

*Chor.* Many are the sayings of the wise  
In antient and in modern books enroll'd;  
Extolling Patience as the truest fortitude;  
And to the bearing well of all calamities, [ 655 ]  
All chances incident to mans frail life  
Consolatories writ  
With studied argument, and much perswasion sought  
Lenient of grief and anxious thought,  
But with th' afflicted in his pangs thir sound [ 660 ]  
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune,  
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,  
Unless he feel within  
Some source of consolation from above;  
Secret refreshings, that repair his strength, [ 665 ]  
And fainting spirits uphold.

God of our Fathers, what is man!  
That thou towards him with hand so various,  
Or might I say contrarious,  
Temperst thy providence through his short course, [ 670 ]  
Not evenly, as thou rul'st  
The Angelic orders and inferiour creatures mute,  
Irrational and brute.  
Nor do I name of men the common rout,  
That wandering loose about [ 675 ]  
Grow up and perish, as the summer flie,  
Heads without name no more rememberd,  
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,  
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd  
To some great work, thy glory, [ 680 ]  
And peoples safety, which in part they effect:

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Yet toward these thus dignifi'd, thou oft  
Amidst thir highth of noon,  
Changest thy countenance, and thy hand with no regard  
Of highest favours past [ 685 ]  
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.

Nor only dost degrade them, or remit  
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismissal,  
But throw'st them lower then thou didst exalt them high,  
Unseemly falls in human eie, [ 690 ]  
Too grievous for the trespass or omission,  
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword  
Of Heathen and prophane, thir carkasses  
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd:  
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times, [ 695 ]  
And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.  
If these they scape, perhaps in poverty  
With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,  
Painful diseases and deform'd,  
In crude old age; [ 700 ]  
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering  
The punishment of dissolute days, in fine,  
Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,  
For oft alike, both come to evil end.

So deal not with this once thy glorious Champion, [ 705 ]  
The Image of thy strength, and mighty minister.  
What do I beg? how hast thou dealt already?  
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn  
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.

But who is this, what thing of Sea or Land? [ 710 ]  
Femal of sex it seems,  
That so bedeckt, ornate, and gay,  
Comes this way sailing  
Like a stately Ship  
Of Tarsus, bound for th' Isles [ 715 ]  
Of Javan or Gadier  
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,  
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,  
Court'd by all the winds that hold them play,  
An Amber sent of odorous perfume [ 720 ]  
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;  
Some rich *Philistian* Matron she may seem,  
And now at nearer view, no other certain  
Then *Dalila* thy wife.

*Sam.* My Wife, my Traytress, let her not come near me. [ 725 ]

*Chor.* Yet on she moves, now stands & eies thee fixt,  
About t' have spoke, but now, with head declin'd  
Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps  
And words addrest seem into tears dissolv'd,  
Wetting the borders of her silk'n veil: [ 730 ]  
But now again she makes address to speak.

*Dal.* With doubtful feet and wavering resolution  
I came, still dreading thy displeasure, *Samson*,  
Which to have merited, without excuse,  
I cannot but acknowledge; yet if tears [ 735 ]  
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew  
In the perverse event then I foresaw)  
My penance hath not slack'n'd, though my pardon  
No way assur'd. But conjugal affection  
Prevailing over fear, and timerous doubt [ 740 ]  
Hath led me on desirous to behold  
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate.  
If aught in my ability may serve  
To light'n what thou suffer'st, and appease  
Thy mind with what amends is in my power, [ 745 ]  
Though late, yet in some part to recompense  
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

*Sam.* Out, out Hyæna; these are thy wonted arts,  
And arts of every woman false like thee,  
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray, [ 750 ]  
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,  
And reconcilment move with feign'd remorse,  
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,  
Not truly penitent, but chief to try  
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears, [ 755 ]  
His vertue or weakness which way to assail:  
Then with more cautious and instructed skill  
Again transgresses, and again submits;  
That wisest and best men full oft beguil'd  
With goodness principl'd not to reject [ 760 ]  
The penitent, but ever to forgive,  
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,  
Entangl'd with a poysnous bosom snake,  
If not quick destruction soon cut off  
As I by thee, to Ages an example. [ 765 ]

*Dal.* Yet hear me *Samson*; not that I endeavour  
To lessen or extenuate my offence,  
But that on th' other side if it be weigh'd  
By it self, with aggravations not surcharg'd,  
Or else with just allowance counterpois'd [ 770 ]

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I may, if possible, thy pardon find  
 The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.  
 First granting, as I do, it was a weakness  
 In me, but incident to all our sex,  
 Curiosity, inquisitive, importune [ 775 ]  
 Of secrets, then with like infirmity  
 To publish them, both common female faults:  
 Was it not weakness also to make known  
 For importunity, that is for naught,  
 Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety? [ 780 ]  
 To what I did thou shewdst me first the way.  
 But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not.  
 Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to womans frailty  
 E're I to thee, thou to thy self wast cruel.  
 Let weakness then with weakness come to parl [ 785 ]  
 So near related, or the same of kind,  
 Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine  
 The gentler, if severely thou exact not  
 More strength from me, then in thy self was found.  
 And what if Love, which thou interpret'st hate, [ 790 ]  
 The jealousie of Love, powerful of sway  
 In human hearts, nor less in mine towards thee,  
 Caus'd what I did? I saw thee mutable  
 Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou wouldst leave me  
 As her at *Timna*, sought by all means therefore [ 795 ]  
 How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest:  
 No better way I saw then by importuning  
 To learn thy secrets, get into my power  
 Thy key of strength and safety: thou wilt say,  
 Why then reveal'd? I was assur'd by those [ 800 ]  
 Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd  
 Against thee but safe custody, and hold:  
 That made for me, I knew that liberty  
 Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,  
 While I at home sate full of cares and fears [ 805 ]  
 Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;  
 Here I should still enjoy thee day and night  
 Mine and Loves prisoner, not the *Philistines*,  
 Whole to my self, unhazarded abroad,  
 Fearless at home of partners in my love. [ 810 ]  
 These reasons in Loves law have past for good,  
 Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;  
 And Love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much wo,  
 Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.  
 Be not unlike all others, not austere [ 815 ]

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As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.  
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,  
In uncompassionate anger do not so.

*Sam.* How cunningly the sorceress displays  
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine? [ 820 ]  
That malice not repentance brought thee hither,  
By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, th' example,  
I led the way; bitter reproach, but true,  
I to my self was false e're thou to me,  
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly, [ 825 ]  
Take to thy wicked deed: which when thou seest  
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,  
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather  
Confess it feign'd, weakness is thy excuse,  
And I believe it, weakness to resist [ 830 ]  
*Philistian* gold: if weakness may excuse,  
What Murderer, what Traytor, Parricide,  
Incestuous, Sacrilegious, but may plead it?  
All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore  
With God or Man will gain thee no remission. [ 835 ]  
But Love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage  
To satisfie thy lust: Love seeks to have Love;  
My love how couldst thou hope, who tookst the way  
To raise in me inexpiable hate,  
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd? [ 840 ]  
In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,  
Or by evasions thy crime uncoverst more.

*Dal.* Since thou determinst weakness for no plea  
In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,  
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides, [ 845 ]  
What sieges girt me round, e're I consented;  
Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd of men,  
The constantest to have yielded without blame.  
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,  
That wrought with me: thou know'st the Magistrates [ 850 ]  
And Princes of my countrey came in person,  
Sollicited, commanded, threatn'd, urg'd,  
Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil Duty  
And of Religion, press'd how just it was,  
How honourable, how glorious to entrap [ 855 ]  
A common enemy, who had destroy'd  
Such numbers of our Nation: and the Priest  
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,  
Preaching how meritorious with the gods  
It would be to ensnare an irreligious [ 860 ]

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Dishonourer of *Dagon*: what had I  
 To oppose against such powerful arguments?  
 Only my love of thee held long debate;  
 And combated in silence all these reasons  
 With hard contest: at length that grounded maxim [ 865 ]  
 So rife and celebrated in the mouths  
 Of wisest men; that to the public good  
 Private respects must yield; with grave authority  
 Took full possession of me and prevail'd;  
 Vertue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoyning. [ 870 ]  
*Sam.* I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;  
 In feign'd Religion, smooth hypocrisie.  
 But had thy love, still odiously pretended,  
 Bin, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee  
 Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds. [ 875 ]  
 I before all the daughters of my Tribe  
 And of my Nation chose thee from among  
 My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,  
 Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,  
 Not out of levity, but over-powr'd [ 880 ]  
 By thy request, who could deny thee nothing;  
 Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then  
 Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband?  
 Then, as since then, thy countries foe profest:  
 Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave [ 885 ]  
 Parents and countray; nor was I their subject,  
 Nor under their protection but my own,  
 Thou mine, not theirs: if aught against my life  
 Thy countray sought of thee, it sought unjustly,  
 Against the law of nature, law of nations, [ 890 ]  
 No more thy countray, but an impious crew  
 Of men conspiring to uphold thir state  
 By worse then hostile deeds, violating the ends  
 For which our countray is a name so dear;  
 Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal mov'd thee; [ 895 ]  
 To please thy gods thou didst it; gods unable  
 To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes  
 But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction  
 Of their own deity, Gods cannot be:  
 Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd, [ 900 ]  
 These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,  
 Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear?  
*Dal.* In argument with men a woman ever  
 Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

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*Sam.* For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath, [ 905 ]  
Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

*Dal.* I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken  
In what I thought would have succeeded best.  
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, *Samson*,  
Afford me place to shew what recompense [ 910 ]  
Towards thee I intend for what I have misdome,  
Misguided: only what remains past cure  
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist  
To afflict thy self in vain: though sight be lost,  
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd [ 915 ]  
Where other senses want not their delights  
At home in leisure and domestic ease,  
Exempt from many a care and chance to which  
Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.  
I to the Lords will intercede, not doubting [ 920 ]  
Thir favourable ear, that I may fetch thee  
From forth this loathsom prison-house, to abide  
With me, where my redoubl'd love and care  
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,  
May ever tend about thee to old age [ 925 ]  
With all things grateful chear'd, and so suppli'd,  
That what by me thou hast lost thou least shalt miss.

*Sams.* No, no, of my condition take no care;  
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain;  
Nor think me so unwary or accurst [ 930 ]  
To bring my feet again into the snare  
Where once I have been caught; I know thy trains  
Though dearly to my cost, thy ginns, and toyls;  
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms  
No more on me have power, their force is null'd, [ 935 ]  
So much of Adders wisdom I have learn't  
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.  
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men  
Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone could hate me  
Thy Husband, slight me, sell me, and forgo me; [ 940 ]  
How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby  
Deceiveable, in most things as a child  
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,  
And last neglected? How wouldst thou insult  
When I must live uxorious to thy will [ 945 ]  
In perfet thraldom, how again betray me,  
Bearing my words and doings to the Lords  
To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile?

This Gaol I count the house of Liberty  
 To thine whose doors my feet shall never enter. [ 950 ]  
*Dal.* Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.  
*Sam.* Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake  
 My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.  
 At distance I forgive thee, go with that;  
 Bewail thy falshood, and the pious works [ 955 ]  
 It hath brought forth to make thee memorable  
 Among illustrious women, faithful wives:  
 Cherish thy hast'n'd widowhood with the gold  
 Of Matrimonial treason: so farwel.  
*Dal.* I see thou art implacable, more deaf [ 960 ]  
 To prayers, then winds and seas, yet winds to seas  
 Are reconcil'd at length, and Sea to Shore:  
 Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,  
 Eternal tempest never to be calm'd.  
 Why do I humble thus my self, and suing [ 965 ]  
 For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?  
 Bid go with evil omen and the brand  
 Of infamy upon my name denounc't?  
 To mix with thy concernments I desist  
 Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own. [ 970 ]  
 Fame if not double-fac't is double-mouth'd,  
 And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds,  
 On both his wings, one black, th' other white,  
 Bears greatest names in his wild aerie flight.  
 My name perhaps among the Circumcis'd [ 975 ]  
 In *Dan*, in *Judah*, and the bordering Tribes,  
 To all posterity may stand defam'd,  
 With malediction mention'd, and the blot  
 Of falshood most unconjugal traduc't.  
 But in my countrey where I most desire, [ 980 ]  
 In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath  
 I shall be nam'd among the famousest  
 Of Women, sung at solemn festivals,  
 Living and dead recorded, who to save  
 Her countrey from a fierce destroyer, chose [ 985 ]  
 Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb  
 With odours visited and annual flowers.  
 Not less renown'd then in Mount *Ephraim*,  
Jael, who with inhospitable guile  
 Smote *Sisera* sleeping through the Temples nail'd. [ 990 ]  
 Nor shall I count it hainous to enjoy  
 The public marks of honour and reward  
 Conferr'd upon me, for the piety

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Which to my countrey I was judg'd to have shewn.  
At this who ever envies or repines [ 995 ]  
I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

*Chor.* She's gone, a manifest Serpent by her sting  
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

*Sam.* So let her go, God sent her to debase me,  
And aggravate my folly who committed [ 1000 ]  
To such a viper his most sacred trust  
Of secresie, my safety, and my life.

*Chor.* Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,  
After offence returning, to regain  
Love once possest, nor can be easily [ 1005 ]  
Repuls't, without much inward passion felt  
And secret sting of amorous remorse.

*Sam.* Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end,  
Not wedlock-trechery endangering life.

*Cho.* It is not vertue, wisdom, valour, wit, [ 1010 ]  
Strength, comliness of shape, or amplest merit  
That womans love can win or long inherit;  
But what it is, hard is to say,  
Harder to hit,

(Which way soever men refer it) [ 1015 ]  
Much like thy riddle, *Samson*, in one day  
Or seven, though one should musing sit;

If any of these or all, the *Timnian* bride  
Had not so soon preferr'd  
Thy Paranymp, worthless to thee compar'd, [ 1020 ]  
Successour in thy bed,  
Nor both so loosly disally'd  
Thir nuptials, nor this last so treacherously  
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.  
Is it for that such outward ornament [ 1025 ]  
Was lavish't on thir Sex, that inward gifts  
Were left for haste unfinish't, judgment scant,  
Capacity not rais'd to apprehend  
Or value what is best

In choice, but ofttest to affect the wrong? [ 1030 ]  
Or was too much of self-love mixt,  
Of constancy no root infixt,  
That either they love nothing, or not long?

What e're it be, to wisest men and best  
Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil, [ 1035 ]  
Soft, modest, meek, demure,  
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn  
Intestin, far within defensive arms



A cleaving mischief, in his way to vertue  
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms [ 1040 ]  
Draws him awry enslav'd  
With dotage, and his sense deprav'd  
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.  
What Pilot so expert but needs must wreck  
Embarqu'd with such a Stears-mate at the Helm? [ 1045 ]

Favour'd of Heav'n who finds  
One vertuous rarely found,  
That in domestic good combines:  
Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth:  
But vertue which breaks through all opposition, [ 1050 ]  
And all temptation can remove,  
Most shines and most is acceptable above.

Therefore Gods universal Law  
Gave to the man despotic power  
Over his female in due awe, [ 1055 ]  
Nor from that right to part an hour,  
Smile she or lowre:  
So shall he least confusion draw  
On his whole life, not sway'd  
By female usurpation, nor dismay'd. [ 1060 ]

But had we best retire, I see a storm?  
*Sam.* Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.

*Chor.* But this another kind of tempest brings.

*Sam.* Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past.

*Chor.* Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear [ 1065 ]

The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue  
Draws hitherward, I know him by his stride,  
The Giant *Harapha* of *Gath*, his look  
Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.  
Comes he in peace? what wind hath blown him hither [ 1070 ]

I less conjecture then when first I saw  
The sumptuous *Dalila* floating this way:  
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

*Sam.* Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

*Chor.* His fraught we soon shall know, he now arrives. [ 1075 ]

*Har.* I come not *Samson*, to condole thy chance,

As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,  
Though for no friendly intent. I am of *Gath*,  
Men call me *Harapha*, of stock renown'd  
As *Og* or *Anak* and the *Emims* old [ 1080 ]  
That *Kiriathaim* held, thou knowst me now  
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard  
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd

Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,  
That I was never present on the place [ 1085 ]  
Of those encounters, where we might have tri'd  
Each others force in camp or listed field:  
And now am come to see of whom such noise  
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,  
If thy appearance answer loud report. [ 1090 ]

*Sam.* The way to know were not to see but taste.

*Har.* Dost thou already single me; I thought  
Gives and the Mill had tam'd thee; O that fortune  
Had brought me to the field where thou art fam'd  
To have wrought such wonders with an Asses Jaw; [ 1095 ]  
I should have forc'd thee soon with other arms,  
Or left thy carkass where the Ass lay thrown:  
So had the glory of Prowess been recover'd  
To *Palestine*, won by a *Philistine*  
From the unforeskinn'd race, of whom thou bear'st [ 1100 ]  
The highest name for valiant Acts, that honour  
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,  
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

*Sam.* Boast not of what thou wouldst have done, but do  
What then thou would'st, thou seest it in thy hand. [ 1105 ]

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

*Sam.* Such usage as your honourable Lords  
Afford me assassinated and betray'd,  
Who durst not with thir whole united powers [ 1110 ]  
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,  
Nor in the house with chamber Ambushes  
Close-banded durst attaque me, no not sleeping,  
Till they had hir'd a woman with their gold  
Breaking her Marriage Faith to circumvent me. [ 1115 ]  
Therefore without feign'd shifts let be assign'd  
Some narrow place enclos'd, where sight may give thee,  
Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;  
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy Helmet  
And Brigandine of brass, thy broad Habergeon, [ 1120 ]  
Vant-brass and Greves, and Gauntlet, add thy Spear  
A Weavers beam, and seven-times-folded shield,  
I only with an Oak'n staff will meet thee,  
And raise such out-cries on thy clatter'd Iron,  
Which long shall not with-hold mee from thy head, [ 1125 ]  
That in a little time while breath remains thee,  
Thou oft shalt wish thy self at *Gath* to boast

Again in safety what thou wouldst have done  
To *Samson*, but shalt never see *Gath* more.

*Har.* Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms [ 1130 ]  
Which greatest Heroes have in battel worn,  
Thir ornament and safety, had not spells  
And black enchantments, some Magicians Art  
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from Heaven  
Feign'dst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair, [ 1135 ]  
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs  
Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back  
Of chaf't wild Boars, or ruffl'd Porcupines.

*Sam.* I know no Spells, use no forbidden Arts;  
My trust is in the living God who gave me [ 1140 ]  
At my Nativity this strength, diffus'd  
No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,  
Then thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,  
The pledge of my unviolated vow.  
For proof hereof, if *Dagon* be thy god, [ 1145 ]  
Go to his Temple, invoke his aid  
With solemnest devotion, spread before him  
How highly it concerns his glory now  
To frustrate and dissolve these Magic spells,  
Which I to be the power of *Israel's* God [ 1150 ]  
Avow, and challenge *Dagon* to the test,  
Offering to combat thee his Champion bold,  
With th' utmost of his Godhead seconded:  
Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow  
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine. [ 1155 ]

*Har.* Presume not on thy God, what e're he be,  
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off  
Quite from his people, and delivered up  
Into thy Enemies hand, permitted them  
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee [ 1160 ]  
Into the common Prison, there to grind  
Among the Slaves and Asses thy comrades,  
As good for nothing else, no better service  
With those thy boyst'rous locks, no worthy match  
For valour to assail, nor by the sword [ 1165 ]  
Of noble Warriour, so to stain his honour,  
But by the Barbers razor best subdu'd.

*Sam.* All these indignities, for such they are  
From thine, these evils I deserve and more,  
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me [ 1170 ]  
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon  
Whose ear is ever open; and his eye

Gracious to re-admit the suppliant;  
In confidence whereof I once again  
Defie thee to the trial of mortal fight, [ 1175 ]  
By combat to decide whose god is god,  
Thine or whom I with *Israel's* Sons adore.

*Har.* Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting  
He will accept thee to defend his cause,  
A Murderer, a Revolter, and a Robber. [ 1180 ]

*Sam.* Tongue-doubtie Giant, how dost thou prove me these?

*Har.* Is not thy Nation subject to our Lords?  
Their Magistrates confest it, when they took thee  
As a League-breaker and deliver'd bound  
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed [ 1185 ]  
Notorious murder on those thirty men  
At *Askalon*, who never did thee harm,  
Then like a Robber stripdst them of thir robes?  
The *Philistines*, when thou hadst broke the league,  
Went up with armed powers thee only seeking, [ 1190 ]  
To others did no violence nor spoil.

*Sam.* Among the Daughters of the *Philistines*  
I chose a Wife, which argu'd me no foe;  
And in your City held my Nuptial Feast:  
But your ill-meaning Politician Lords, [ 1195 ]  
Under pretence of Bridal friends and guests,  
Appointed to await me thirty spies,  
Who threatening cruel death constrain'd the bride  
To wring from me and tell to them my secret,  
That solv'd the riddle which I had propos'd. [ 1200 ]  
When I perceiv'd all set on enmity,  
As on my enemies, where ever chanc'd,  
I us'd hostility, and took thir spoil  
To pay my underminers in thir coin.  
My Nation was subjected to your Lords. [ 1205 ]  
It was the force of Conquest; force with force  
Is well ejected when the Conquer'd can.  
But I a private person, whom my Country  
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd  
Single Rebellion and did Hostile Acts. [ 1210 ]  
I was no private but a person rais'd  
With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n  
To free my Country; if their servile minds  
Me their Deliverer sent would not receive,  
But to thir Masters gave me up for nought, [ 1215 ]  
Th' unworthier they; whence to this day they serve.  
I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd,

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And had perform'd it if my known offence  
Had not disabl'd me, not all your force:  
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant [ 1220 ]  
Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,  
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,  
As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

*Har.* With thee a Man condemn'd, a Slave enrol'd,  
Due by the Law to capital punishment? [ 1225 ]  
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

*Sam.* Cam'st thou for this, vain boaster, to survey me,  
To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?  
Come nearer, part not hence so slight inform'd;  
But take good heed my hand survey not thee. [ 1230 ]

*Har.* O Baal-zebub! can my ears unus'd  
Hear these dishonours, and not render death?

*Sam.* No man with-holds thee, nothing from thy hand  
Fear I incurable; bring up thy van,  
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free. [ 1235 ]

*Har.* This insolence other kind of answer fits.

*Sams.* Go baffl'd coward, lest I run upon thee,  
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,  
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,  
Or swing thee in the Air, then dash thee down [ 1240 ]  
To the hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.

*Har.* By Astaroth e're long thou shalt lament  
These braveries in Irons loaden on thee.

*Chor.* His Giantship is gone somewhat crest-fall'n,  
Stalking with less unconsci'nable strides, [ 1245 ]  
And lower looks, but in a sultrie chafe.

*Sam.* I dread him not, nor all his Giant-brood,  
Though Fame divulge him Father of five Sons  
All of Gigantic size, Goliah chief.

*Chor.* He will directly to the Lords, I fear, [ 1250 ]  
And with malicious counsel stir them up  
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.

*Sam.* He must allege some cause, and offer'd fight  
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise  
Whether he durst accept the offer or not, [ 1255 ]  
And that he durst not plain enough appear'd.  
Much more affliction then already felt  
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain;  
If they intend advantage of my labours  
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping [ 1260 ]  
With no small profit daily to my owners.  
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove

My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence,  
The worst that he can give, to me the best.  
Yet so it may fall out, because thir end [ 1265 ]  
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine  
Draw thir own ruin who attempt the deed.

*Chor.* Oh how comely it is and how reviving  
To the Spirits of just men long opprest!  
When God into the hands of thir deliverer [ 1270 ]  
Puts invincible might  
To quell the mighty of the Earth, th' oppressour,  
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men  
Hardy and industrious to support  
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue [ 1275 ]  
The righteous and all such as honour Truth;  
He all thir Ammunition  
And feats of War defeats  
With plain Heroic magnitude of mind  
And celestial vigour arm'd [ 1280 ]  
Thir Armories and Magazins contemns,  
Renders them useless, while  
With winged expedition  
Swift as the lightning glance he executes  
His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd [ 1285 ]  
Lose thir defence distracted and amaz'd.

But patience is more oft the exercise  
Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,  
Making them each his own Deliverer,  
And Victor over all [ 1290 ]  
That tyrannie or fortune can inflict,  
Either of these is in thy lot,  
*Samson*, with might endu'd  
Above the Sons of men; but sight bereav'd  
May chance to number thee with those [ 1295 ]  
Whom Patience finally must crown.  
This Idols day hath bin to thee no day of rest,  
Labouring thy mind  
More then the working day thy hands,  
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind. [ 1300 ]  
For I descry this way  
Some other tending, in his hand  
A Scepter or quaint staff he bears,  
Comes on amain, speed in his look.  
By his habit I discern him now [ 1305 ]  
A Public Officer, and now at hand.  
His message will be short and voluble.

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*Off.* *Ebrews*, the Pris'ner *Samson* here I seek.

*Chor.* His manacles remark him, there he sits.

*Off.* *Samson*, to thee our Lords thus bid me say; [ 1310 ]

This day to *Dagon* is a solemn Feast,  
With Sacrifices, Triumph, Pomp, and Games;  
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,  
And now some public proof thereof require  
To honour this great Feast, and great Assembly; [ 1315 ]  
Rise therefore with all speed and come along,  
Where I will see thee heartn'd and fresh clad  
To appear as fits before th' illustrious Lords.

*Sam.* Thou knowst I am an *Ebrew*, therefore tell them,  
Our Law forbids at thir Religious Rites [ 1320 ]  
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.

*Off.* This answer, be assur'd, will not content them.

*Sam.* Have they not Sword-players, and ev'ry sort  
Of Gymnic Artists, Wrestlers, Riders, Runners,  
Juglers and Dancers, Antics, Mummings, Mimics, [ 1325 ]  
But they must pick me out with shackles tir'd,  
And over-labour'd at thir publick Mill,  
To make them sport with blind activity?  
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels  
On my refusal to distress me more, [ 1330 ]  
Or make a game of my calamities?  
Return the way thou cam'st, I will not come.

*Off.* Regard thy self, this will offend them highly.

*Sam.* My self? my conscience and internal peace.  
Can they think me so broken, so debas'd [ 1335 ]  
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever  
Will condescend to such absurd commands?  
Although thir drudge, to be thir fool or jester,  
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief  
To shew them feats and play before thir god, [ 1340 ]  
The worst of all indignities, yet on me  
Joyn'd with extream contempt? I will not come.

*Off.* My message was impos'd on me with speed,  
Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution?

*Sam.* So take it with what speed thy message needs. [ 1345 ]

*Off.* I am sorry what this stoutness will produce.

*Sa.* Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.

*Chor.* Consider, *Samson*; matters now are strain'd  
Up to the highth, whether to hold or break;  
He's gone, and who knows how he may report [ 1350 ]  
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?

Expect another message more imperious,  
More Lordly thund'ring than thou wilt bear.

*Sam.* Shall I abuse this Consecrated gift  
Of strength, again returning with my hair [ 1355 ]  
After my great transgression, so requite  
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin  
By prostituting holy things to Idols;  
A *Nazarite* in place abominable  
Vaunting my strength in honour to thir *Dagon*? [ 1360 ]  
Besides, how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,  
What act more execrably unclean, prophane?

*Chor.* Yet with this strength thou serv'st the *Philistines*,  
Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, unclean.

*Sam.* Not in thir Idol-worship, but by labour [ 1365 ]  
Honest and lawful to deserve my food  
Of those who have me in thir civil power.

*Chor.* Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.

*Sam.* Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds;  
But who constrains me to the Temple of *Dagon*, [ 1370 ]  
Not dragging? the *Philistian* Lords command.  
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,  
I do it freely; venturing to displease  
God for the fear of Man, and Man prefer,  
Set God behind: which in his jealousy [ 1375 ]  
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.  
Yet that he may dispense with me or thee  
Present in Temples at Idolatrous Rites  
For some important cause, thou needst not doubt.

*Chor.* How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach. [ 1380 ]

*Sam.* Be of good courage, I begin to feel  
Some rousing motions in me which dispose  
To something extraordinary my thoughts.  
I with this Messenger will go along,  
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour [ 1385 ]  
Our Law, or stain my vow of *Nazarite*.  
If there be aught of presage in the mind,  
This day will be remarkable in my life  
By some great act, or of my days the last.

*Chor.* In time thou hast resolv'd, the man returns. [ 1390 ]

*Off. Samson*, this second message from our Lords  
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our Slave,  
Our Captive, at the public Mill our drudge,  
And dar'st thou at our sending and command  
Dispute thy coming? come without delay; [ 1395 ]  
Or we shall find such Engines to assail



And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,  
Though thou wert firmlier fastn'd then a rock.

*Sam.* I could be well content to try thir Art,  
Which to no few of them would prove pernicious. [ 1400 ]  
Yet knowing thir advantages too many,  
Because they shall not trail me through thir streets  
Like a wild Beast, I am content to go.  
Masters commands come with a power resistless  
To such as owe them absolute subjection; [ 1405 ]  
And for a life who will not change his purpose?  
(So mutable are all the ways of men)  
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply  
Scandalous or forbidden in our Law.

*Off.* I praise thy resolution, doff these links: [ 1410 ]  
By this compliance thou wilt win the Lords  
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

*Sam.* Brethren farwel, your company along  
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them  
To see me girt with Friends; and how the sight [ 1415 ]  
Of me as of a common Enemy,  
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them  
I know not. Lords are Lordliest in thir wine;  
And the well-feasted Priest then soonest fir'd  
With zeal, if aught Religion seem concern'd: [ 1420 ]  
No less the people on thir Holy-days  
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable;  
Happ'n what may, of me expect to hear  
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy  
Our God, our Law, my Nation, or my self, [ 1425 ]  
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

*Chor.* Go, and the Holy One  
Of *Israel* be thy guide  
To what may serve his glory best, & spread his name  
Great among the Heathen round: [ 1430 ]  
Send thee the Angel of thy Birth, to stand  
Fast by thy side, who from thy Fathers field  
Rode up in flames after his message told  
Of thy conception, and be now a shield  
Of fire; that Spirit that first rusht on thee [ 1435 ]  
In the camp of *Dan*  
Be efficacious in thee now at need.  
For never was from Heaven imparted  
Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,  
As in thy wond'rous actions hath been seen. [ 1440 ]  
But wherefore comes old *Manoa* in such hast

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With youthful steps? much livelier then e're while  
He seems: supposing here to find his Son,  
Or of him bringing to us some glad news?

*Man.* Peace with you brethren; my inducement hither [ 1445 ]  
Was not at present here to find my Son,  
By order of the Lords new parted hence  
To come and play before them at thir Feast.  
I heard all as I came, the City rings  
And numbers thither flock, I had no will, [ 1450 ]  
Lest I should see him forc't to things unseemly.  
But that which moved my coming now, was chiefly  
To give ye part with me what hope I have  
With good success to work his liberty.

*Cho.* That hope would much rejoyce us to partake [ 1455 ]  
With thee; say reverend Sire, we thirst to hear.

*Man.* I have attempted one by one the Lords  
Either at home, or through the high street passing,  
With supplication prone and Fathers tears  
To accept of ransom for my Son thir pris'ner, [ 1460 ]  
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,  
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;  
That part most reverenc'd *Dagon* and his Priests,  
Others more moderate seeming, but thir aim  
Private reward, for which both God and State [ 1465 ]  
They easily would set to sale, a third  
More generous far and civil, who confess'd  
They had anough reveng'd, having reduc't  
Thir foe to misery beneath thir fears,  
The rest was magnanimity to remit, [ 1470 ]  
If some convenient ransom were propos'd.  
What noise or shout was that? it tore the Skie.

*Chor.* Doubtless the people shouting to behold  
Thir once great dread, captive, & blind before them,  
Or at some proof of strength before them shown. [ 1475 ]

*Man.* His ransom, if my whole inheritance  
May compass it, shall willingly be paid  
And numberd down: much rather I shall chuse  
To live the poorest in my Tribe, then richest,  
And he in that calamitous prison left. [ 1480 ]  
No, I am fixt not to part hence without him.  
For his redemption all my Patrimony,  
If need be, I am ready to forgo  
And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing.

*Chor.* Fathers are wont to lay up for thir Sons, [ 1485 ]  
Thou for thy Son art bent to lay out all;

Sons wont to nurse thir Parents in old age,  
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy Son,  
Made older then thy age through eye-sight lost.

*Man.* It shall be my delight to tend his eyes, [ 1490 ]  
And view him sitting in the house, enobl'd  
With all those high exploits by him atchiev'd,  
And on his shoulders waving down those locks,  
That of a Nation arm'd the strength contain'd:  
And I perswade me God had not permitted [ 1495 ]  
His strength again to grow up with his hair  
Garrison'd round about him like a Camp  
Of faithful Souldiery, were not his purpose  
To use him further yet in some great service,  
Not to sit idle with so great a gift [ 1500 ]  
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.  
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,  
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.

*Chor.* Thy hopes are not ill founded nor seem vain  
Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon [ 1505 ]  
Conceiv'd, agreeable to a Fathers love,  
In both which we, as next participate.

*Man.* I know your friendly minds and — O what noise!  
Mercy of Heav'n what hideous noise was that!  
Horribly loud unlike the former shout. [ 1510 ]

*Chor.* Noise call you it or universal groan  
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd,  
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,  
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

*Man.* Of ruin indeed methought I heard the noise, [ 1515 ]  
Oh it continues, they have slain my Son.

*Chor.* Thy Son is rather slaying them, that outcry  
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

*Man.* Some dismal accident it needs must be;  
What shall we do, stay here or run and see? [ 1520 ]

*Chor.* Best keep together here, lest running thither  
We unawares run into dangers mouth.

This evil on the *Philistines* is fall'n,  
From whom could else a general cry be heard?  
The sufferers then will scarce molest us here, [ 1525 ]  
From other hands we need not much to fear.

What if his eye-sight (for to *Israels* God  
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,  
He now be dealing dole among his foes,  
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way? [ 1530 ]

*Man.* That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.

*Chor.* Yet God hath wrought things as incredible  
For his people of old; what hinders now?

*Man.* He can I know, but doubt to think he will;  
Yet Hope would fain subscribe, and tempts Belief. [ 1535 ]  
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

*Chor.* Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;  
For evil news rides post, while good news baits.  
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,  
An *Ebrew*, as I guess, and of our Tribe. [ 1540 ]

*Mess.* O whither shall I run, or which way flie  
The sight of this so horrid spectacle  
Which earst my eyes beheld and yet behold;  
For dire imagination still persues me.  
But providence or instinct of nature seems, [ 1545 ]  
Or reason though disturb'd, and scarce consulted  
To have guided me aright, I know not how,  
To thee first reverend *Manoa*, and to these  
My Countrey-men, whom here I knew remaining,  
As at some distance from the place of horrour, [ 1550 ]  
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

*Man.* The accident was loud, & here before thee  
With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not,  
No Preface needs, thou seest we long to know.

*Mess.* It would burst forth, but I recover breath [ 1555 ]  
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

*Man.* Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

*Mess.* *Gaza* yet stands, but all her Sons are fall'n,  
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.

*Man.* Sad, but thou knowst to *Israelites* not saddest [ 1560 ]  
The desolation of a Hostile City.

*Mess.* Feed on that first, there may in grief be surfet.

*Man.* Relate by whom. *Mess.* By *Samson*. *Man.* That still lessens  
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

*Mess.* Ah *Manoa* I refrain, too suddenly [ 1565 ]  
To utter what will come at last too soon;  
Lest evil tidings with too rude irruption  
Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.

*Man.* Suspense in news is torture, speak them out.

*Mess.* Then take the worst in brief, *Samson* is dead. [ 1570 ]

*Man.* The worst indeed, O all my hope's defeated  
To free him hence! but death who sets all free  
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.  
What windy joy this day had I conceiv'd  
Hopeful of his Delivery, which now proves [ 1575 ]  
Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring

Nipt with the lagging rear of winters frost.  
 Yet e're I give the reins to grief, say first,  
 How dy'd he? death to life is crown or shame.  
 All by him fell thou say'st, by whom fell he, [ 1580 ]  
 What glorious hand gave *Samson* his deaths wound?  
*Mess.* Unwounded of his enemies he fell.  
*Man.* Wearied with slaughter then or how? explain.  
*Mess.* By his own hands. *Man.* Self-violence? what cause  
 Brought him so soon at variance with himself [ 1585 ]  
 Among his foes? *Mess.* Inevitable cause  
 At once both to destroy and be destroy'd;  
 The Edifice where all were met to see him  
 Upon thir heads and on his own he pull'd.  
*Man.* O lastly over-strong against thy self! [ 1590 ]  
 A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.  
 More then enough we know; but while things yet  
 Are in confusion, give us if thou canst,  
 Eye-witness of what first or last was done,  
 Relation more particular and distinct. [ 1595 ]  
*Mess.* Occasions drew me early to this City,  
 And as the gates I enter'd with Sun-rise,  
 The morning Trumpets Festival proclaim'd  
 Through each high street: little I had dispatch't  
 When all abroad was rumour'd that this day [ 1600 ]  
*Samson* should be brought forth to shew the people  
 Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games;  
 I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded  
 Not to be absent at that spectacle.  
 The building was a spacious Theatre [ 1605 ]  
 Half round on two main Pillars vaulted high,  
 With seats where all the Lords and each degree  
 Of sort, might sit in order to behold,  
 The other side was op'n, where the throng  
 On banks and scaffolds under Skie might stand; [ 1610 ]  
 I among these aloof obscurely stood.  
 The Feast and noon grew high, and Sacrifice  
 Had fill'd thir hearts with mirth, high cheare, & wine,  
 When to thir sports they turn'd. Immediately  
 Was *Samson* as a public servant brought, [ 1615 ]  
 In thir state Livery clad; before him Pipes  
 And Timbrels, on each side went armed guards,  
 Both horse and foot before him and behind  
 Archers, and Slingers, Cataphracts and Spears.  
 At sight of him the people with a shout [ 1620 ]  
 Rifted the Air clamouring thir god with praise,

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Who had made thir dreadful enemy thir thrall.  
 He patient but undaunted where they led him,  
 Came to the place, and what was set before him  
 Which without help of eye, might be assay'd, [ 1625 ]  
 To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd  
 All with incredible, stupendious force,  
 None daring to appear Antagonist.  
 At length for intermission sake they led him  
 Between the pillars; he his guide requested [ 1630 ]  
 (For so from such as nearer stood we heard)  
 As over-tir'd to let him lean a while  
 With both his arms on those two massie Pillars  
 That to the arched roof gave main support.\_  
 He unsuspecting led him; which when *Samson* [ 1635 ]  
 Felt in his arms, with head a while enclin'd,  
 And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray'd,  
 Or some great matter in his mind revolv'd.  
 At last with head erect thus cryed aloud,  
 Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd [ 1640 ]  
 I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,  
 Not without wonder or delight beheld.  
 Now of my own accord such other tryal  
 I mean to shew you of my strength, yet greater;  
 As with amaze shall strike all who behold. [ 1645 ]  
 This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,  
 As with the force of winds and waters pent,  
 When Mountains tremble, those two massie Pillars  
 With horrible convulsion to and fro,  
 He tugg'd, he shook, till down thy came and drew [ 1650 ]  
 The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder  
 Upon the heads of all who sate beneath,  
 Lords, Ladies, Captains, Councillors, or Priests,  
 Thir choice nobility and flower, not only  
 Of this but each *Philistian* City round [ 1655 ]  
 Met from all parts to solemnize this Feast.  
*Samson* with these immixt, inevitably  
 Pulld down the same destruction on himself;  
 The vulgar only scap'd who stood without.  
*Chor.* O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious! [ 1660 ]  
 Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd  
 The work for which thou wast foretold  
 To *Israel*, and now ly'st victorious  
 Among thy slain self-kill'd  
 Not willingly, but tangl'd in the fold [ 1665 ]  
 Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd

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Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more  
Then all thy life had slain before.

*Semichor.* While thir hearts were jocund and sublime,  
Drunk with Idolatry, drunk with Wine, [ 1670 ]  
And fat regorg'd of Bulls and Goats,  
Chaunting thir Idol, and preferring  
Before our living Dread who dwells  
In Silo his bright Sanctuary:  
Among them he a spirit of phrenzy sent, [ 1675 ]  
Who hurt thir minds,  
And urg'd them on with mad desire  
To call in hast for thir destroyer;  
They only set on sport and play  
Unweetingly importun'd [ 1680 ]  
Thir own destruction to come speedy upon them.  
So fond are mortal men  
Fall'n into wrath divine,  
As thir own ruin on themselves to invite,  
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate, [ 1685 ]  
And with blindness internal struck.

*Semichor.* But he though blind of sight,  
Despis'd and thought extinguish't quite,  
With inward eyes illuminated  
His fierie vertue rouz'd [ 1690 ]  
From under ashes into sudden flame,  
And as an ev'ning Dragon came,  
Assailant on the perched roosts,  
And nests in order rang'd  
Of tame villatic Fowl; but as an Eagle [ 1695 ]  
His cloudless thunder bolted on thir heads.  
So vertue giv'n for lost,  
Deprest, and overthrown, as seem'd,  
Like that self-begott'n bird  
In the *Arabian* woods embost, [ 1700 ]  
That no second knows nor third,  
And lay e're while a Holocaust,  
From out her ashie womb now teem'd  
Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most  
When most unactive deem'd, [ 1705 ]  
And though her body die, her fame survives,  
A secular bird ages of lives.

*Man.* Come, come, no time for lamentation now,  
Nor much more cause, *Samson* hath quit himself  
Like *Samson*, and heroicly hath finish'd [ 1710 ]  
A life Heroic, on his Enemies

Fully reveng'd, hath left them years of mourning,  
 And lamentation to the Sons of Caphtor  
 Through all *Philistian* bounds. To *Israel*  
 Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them [ 1715 ]  
 Find courage to lay hold on this occasion,  
 To himself and Fathers house eternal fame;  
 And which is best and happiest yet, all this  
 With God not parted from him, as was fear'd,  
 But favouring and assisting to the end. [ 1720 ]  
 Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
 Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,  
 Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,  
 And what may quiet us in a death so noble.  
 Let us go find the body where it lies [ 1725 ]  
 Sok't in his enemies blood, and from the stream  
 With lavers pure and cleansing herbs wash off  
 The clotted gore. I with what speed the while  
 (*Gaza* is not in plight to say us nay)  
 Will send for all my kindred, all my friends [ 1730 ]  
 To fetch him hence and solemnly attend  
 With silent obsequie and funeral train  
 Home to his Fathers house: there will I build him  
 A Monument, and plant it round with shade  
 Of Laurel ever green, and branching Palm, [ 1735 ]  
 With all his Trophies hung, and Acts enroll'd  
 In copious Legend, or sweet Lyric Song.  
 Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,  
 And from his memory inflame thir breasts  
 To matchless valour, and adventures high: [ 1740 ]  
 The Virgins also shall on feastful days  
 Visit his Tomb with flowers, only bewailing  
 His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,  
 From whence captivity and loss of eyes.  
*Chor.* All is best, though we oft doubt, [ 1745 ]  
 What th' unsearchable dispose  
 Of highest wisdom brings about,  
 And ever best found in the close.  
 Oft he seems to hide his face,  
 But unexpectedly returns [ 1750 ]  
 And to his faithful Champion hath in place  
 Bore witness gloriously; whence *Gaza* mourns  
 And all that band them to resist  
 His uncontrollable intent,  
 His servants he with new acquit [ 1755 ]  
 Of true experience from this great event

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With peace and consolation hath dismiss,  
And calm of mind all passion spent.

### THE END

#### Notes:

*Introduction.* *Samson Agonistes* was first published in 1671 in one volume with Milton's four-book epic, *Paradise Regain'd*. The title page read: "Paradise Regain'd. A Poem. In IV Books. To which is added Samson Agonistes." Because the 1671 title page might appear to treat *Samson Agonistes* as a kind of supplement to *Paradise Regain'd*, some early readers assumed that the two poems were composed at about the same time, or that *Samson* was written shortly after *Paradise Regain'd*.

William Riley Parker, in his 1968 biography, argued that Milton wrote *Samson* in the 1640s or 1650s, citing certain metrical similarities to earlier poems and Milton's own marital difficulties with his first wife, Mary Powell. However, the general consensus at present is in favor of a later date of composition, after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Blair Worden has shown how much the language of the drama echoes statements made by and about republicans and regicides imprisoned or exiled during the Restoration; Milton was one of those imprisoned, though briefly.

The 1671 edition also included a separate title page at the beginning of *Samson Agonistes* that identified the piece generically as "a Dramatic Poem." Milton meant the poem to be read as a tragedy but not performed on the stage. In an essay placed just before the poem and titled, "Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is call'd Tragedy," Milton specifically noted that *Samson Agonistes* was never intended for the stage (see Elizabeth Sauer's essay, "The Politics of Performance in the Inner Theater: *Samson Agonistes* as Closet Drama"). Citing classical tragedians—Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—as precedents, Milton modeled his tragic dramatic poem on their works and on Aristotle's descriptions of tragedy in the *Poetics*.

The *Samson* titlepage features a quotation, in Greek and Latin translation, from chapter six of Aristotle's *Poetics*, the beginning of Aristotle's treatment of tragedy: "Tragedy is, then, a representation of an action, . . . through pity and fear it effects relief to these and similar emotions" (translated by W. A. Fyfe). Milton's drama, however, might be said to concentrate more on representing the inner mental and emotional struggle (agon) of its hero, than on representing his actions. The most significant outward action of the play—Samson's murder of the Philistine elite in Dagon's temple—takes place off-stage. In his essay on tragedy,

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Milton echoed Aristotle's phrase, "imitation of an action," but with a significant change:

Tragedy, as it was antiently compos'd, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other Poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr'd up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton tried to redefine heroism as "Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" (*Paradise Lost* 9.32); Samson's tragic heroism is similarly an inward sort. Whether or not his outward action counts as heroic depends upon how we evaluate the "rouzing motions" that prompt it (*Samson* 1382).

The story that underlies Milton's plot in *Samson* comes from the Biblical book of Judges, chapters 13-16. Milton added characters to the biblical story (Harapha the arrogant carpet-knight giant and the Publick Officer), ignored some (Samson's mother), inflated others (Samson's father), but the most significant change was to make Dalila Samson's legally wedded wife. Judges 16:4 describes Delilah as a Philistine woman "from the valley of Soreck" whom Samson "loved" sometime after having gone "in unto" a "harlot" in Gaza (16:1). Flavius Josephus, in his *Jewish Antiquities* 5:306 writes the following: "[Samson] at length transgressed the laws of his country, and altered his own regular way of living, and imitated the strange customs of foreigners, which thing was the beginning of his miseries; for he fell in love with a woman that was a harlot among the Philistines: her name was Delilah, and he lived with her." *Paradise Lost* refers once to Delilah as a harlot (*Paradise Lost* 9.1060). In this poem, however, Milton re-casts Dalila as Samson's "Traytress" wife, perhaps the most perfect example in every particular of the "unfit and mistak'n wife" Milton described in his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* of 1644. (Search the text for "unfit" to find many more examples.) It may be helpful to regard Samson as achieving a sort of heroism Adam could not: Samson divorces his unfit wife.

*The Milton Reading Room* text of both these poems was prepared from the 1671 edition as found in the Rauner Special Collections of the Dartmouth College Library (Val. 824/M64/U612). This copy appears to be made up of the following signature states identified by Harris Fletcher (4.30-34): Signature B-state 1; C-1; F-2; H-1; K-2; M-2; N-1; P-2. There are no signatures A or J; all other signatures display no printing variations according to Fletcher. All of the errors listed as "Errata" at the end of the volume have been corrected in ink or erasures by a careful hand, except that where the "Errata" calls for removing a full stop after "frail life" in SA 656, the period has been changed to a comma.

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*The Argument.* The "argument" here is a summary of the action of the play, similar to the arguments that precede each book of *Paradise Lost*. The plot of the

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dramatic poem comes from Judges 13-16. Orgel and Goldberg think that in choosing his plot, Samson's last days, Milton imitates Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus.

*Gaza*. The principal city of the Philistines during the period of their domination over the Hebrews.

*Festival day*. The festival in honor of Dagon, one of the Philistine deities. Milton represents Dagon as a "Sea Monster, upward Man and downward Fish" in Paradise Lost 1.462-63.

*tribe*. Samson's tribe is the Danites (the descendants of Dan). Milton describes Samson as "the Danite strong" in Paradise Lost 9.1059.

*Catastrophe*. The turning point of the drama; the event that produces the denouement. Aristotle called it the peripety; see Poetics 1452a-1452b.

*by accident*. That is, as a secondary effect of his chief intention. In Judges 16: 30, Samson prays, "Let me die with the Philistines," but Milton may be trying here to remove or make ambiguous, the implication of suicide.

*his Wife*. In Judges 14-16, Delilah is never described as Samson's wife.

*Harapha*. Milton added this fictional giant to the Samson story. In lines 1248-49, Milton calls him "Father of five Sons/ All of Gigantic Size, *Goliath* chief." For the David and Goliath story, see 1 Samuel 17-22.

*dark steps*. These opening lines resemble the opening of Sophocles's Oedipus at Colonus, in which Antigone leads her blind father, Oedipus.

*day-spring*. daybreak. See Luke 1: 78. Also, compare to Paradise Lost 5.139 and 6.521.

*popular noise*. That is, the noise of the people gathered for the festival.

*like a deadly swarm*. See Paradise Regain'd 1.196-97 where the Son is described as beset with "multitudes" of thoughts as he is led into the desert.

*what once I was*. Compare this phrase to Satan's lament: "bitter memory/ Of what he was, what is" in Paradise Lost 4.24-25.

*from Heaven foretold*. See Judges 13: 3-5.

*fiery column charioting.* Compare to Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* 5.279, in which he writes that the angel rose to heaven from the rock where Manoa burned his sacrifice "by means of the smoke, as by a vehicle."

*a person separate to God.* Samson was a Nazarite, separated from others from birth for ritual purity and piety, dedicated specially to God. See Numbers 6: 2.

*bondslave.* A more emphatic word than simply "slave", as defined in *OED2*.

*what part lodg'd.* That is, as Samson supposes, in his hair. A Nazarite was never to "use a razor on his head." See Numbers 6: 5.

*Seal of Silence.* In the Judges story, Samson does not take a vow of silence. See Numbers 6: 1-21 for a Nazarite's vows and duties.

*Proudly secure, yet liable to fall.* Compare to *Paradise Lost* 3.99: "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall."

*O loss of sight.* Milton also was blind and often thematized his blindness. See Sonnet 19 (sometimes numbered as 16), "When I consider how my light is spent." See also *Paradise Lost* 3.22-55.

*Light the prime work of God.* The first created thing. See Genesis 1: 3 and *Paradise Lost* 7.243.

*extinct.* extinguished.

*daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong.* Compare this to Milton's complaint about daily being obliged to deal with fools in *Colasterion*.

*still.* Always, persistently.

*Lines 78-79.* Samson's words here are ambiguous and capable of meaning more, perhaps, than he intends. He thinks of himself as more than half dead, but we also might say he has never been the possessor of his own power, but of a special power leant by his God. According to Puritan doctrine, living fully will require a "death to self."

*silent as the Moon.* Compare to Dante's *Inferno* 1.60 in which he says that the sun is silent in hell.

*interlunar cave.* The period between the waning and waxing (or new) moon: that is, between moons.

*She all in every part.* Augustine taught that the soul is diffused throughout every part of the body in his *De Trinitate* 5.6.

*tore the Lion.* See Judges 14: 5-6.

*Made Arms ridiculous.* In *Paradise Lost* 9.28-41, Milton scorns epics that celebrate arms and battles. Both Virgil in his *Aeneid* and Homer in his *Iliad* made battles and arms their epic subjects.

*tender ball.* Though my first Milton teacher, Barbara Lewalski, told me she thinks the idea perverse, I cannot help hearing Samson here express some anxiety about the fragility of masculinity, as well as of the sense of sight. In any case, loss of manhood is all of a piece here with loss of sight, power, and apparently, God's other special gifts.

*not as feeling.* That is, not like the sense of touch. Both Aristotle and Augustine revered the sense of sight as the most noble of the senses and that of touch as the least. Samson laments that the least noble sense is diffused throughout the body and sight confined to a fragile "tender ball."

*My self my Sepulcher.* This implies the Puritan notion of the self (as body) as the tomb or "living death" of the self (as soul). Samson echoes Paul's reference to the "body of this death" in Romans 7: 24. The line also tends to echo Satan's acknowledgement in *Paradise Lost* 4.75: "Myself am Hell." In addition, this line can be compared to Adam dreading "a living death" in *Paradise Lost* 10.788.

*obnoxious.* Exposed to every harm.

*inhuman foes.* The Philistines are not, of course, inhuman. Perhaps we should understand the word as "inhumane," but it is more likely that Milton portrays Samson as one who thinks of the Philistines as less than human. Whether or not Milton shares Samson's racist attitude is a matter for debate.

*Chor.* The Chorus. Milton follows the classical practice of using a chorus as a kind of commentator on the drama as it unfolds. Sophocles used a chorus in his tragedies: see Sophocles' *Ajax*. The practice was uncommon in early modern tragedy.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has no chorus, but his *Henry V* does.

*Lines 118-119.* These lines echo Ovid's description of Hermaphroditus in *Metamorphoses* 4.373.

*weeds.* Clothes.

*Chalybean*. Virgil celebrated the Chalybes for their metal-working skills in his *Georgics* 1.58.

*Adamantean*. Rock-hard.

*tools*. weapons. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* 1.1.28, the word meant sword: "Draw thy tool."

*Ascalonite*. Ascalon (Ashkelon) was, along with Gaza, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. Samson slew thirty men there. See Judges 14: 19.

*jaw of a dead Ass*. See the story in Judges 15: 15-16.

*thousand fore-skins*. The Philistines were, of course, uncircumcised. The Chorus refers to them here metonymically, and scornfully, as foreskins.

*Ramath-lechi*. See Judges 15: 17: Samson named the place after his deed, literally, the casting away of the jawbone.

*Azza*. Variant of Gaza.

*Lines 148-149*. These lines refer to the Jewish law that no man should "go out of his place" on the Sabbath. See Exodus 16: 29. Samson defied that law in carrying the gates almost forty miles, from Gaza to Hebron. Anak's father, Arba, lived in the city of Hebron. Anak's sons were giants. See Numbers 13: 33.

*Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav'n*. That is, Atlas, the Titan who was fabled to bear heaven on his shoulders.

*Dungeon of thy self*. This sounds very much like Satan's situation in *Paradise Lost*: "Myself am Hell" (*Paradise Lost* 4.75).

*darkness of the body*. The phrase invites comparison with Paul's expostulation in Romans 7: 24: "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

*outward light/inward light*. For Milton's sense of outward light versus inward light, see the invocation to Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*, lines 1-55.

*high estate*. According to Aristotle's definition of tragedy, its protagonist must be one of high estate, noble by birth (*Poetics* 1453a). Milton redefines "high estate" as a matter of virtue rather than of birth. In Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*, Milton offers an even more detailed redefinition of tragedy and heroism: *Paradise Lost* 9.5-41.

*vertue was her mate*. Physical strength, in this figure of speech, is gendered as feminine, virtue as masculine, "her mate." Milton's God describes Adam's fall

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from virtue as "effeminate slackness" in *Paradise Lost* 11.634. Manliness is also a topic of Raphael's discourse at the end of Book 8, lines 561-585.

*subdu'd the Earth*. In Genesis, God enjoined the newly created Adam to "Be fruitfull and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1: 28). Milton records this injunction in *Paradise Lost* 7.531-532.

*Eshtaol and Zora*. Danite cities. Samson was born in Zora and was buried between these two cities. See Judges 16: 31.

*tumors*. Tumor was sometimes defined as a "'swelling' of passion or pride." See *OED2*.

*Superscription*. Literally, how untrue are many who are called friends, where the image of a counterfeit coin, embossed with the name "Friend" conveys the sense.

*Lines 198-200*. Samson's vessel is his body which he wrecks by giving in to Dalila. Milton continues this nautical imagery throughout the text. For example, see lines 711-18.

*divulg'd the secret gift of God*. See the story of Samson's betrayal by Delilah in Judges 16: 4-22.

*two proportion'd ill*. The image of ill proportioned pairs is a major theme of Milton's divorce tracts. See especially *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.

*wisest Men*. In *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton often remarks how easy it is even for the wisest and soberest of men to be mistaken in their choice of women; see *Doctrine* 1.3. Also, in *Tetrachordon*, Milton depicted Adam as the sole man who could choose the correct mate according to God's command.

*Philistian women*. Although Samson's first wife, the Woman of Timna, was a Philistine (Judges 14: 1), the Bible does not specifically say that Dalila was also. Milton can be seen as interpreting her as such in order to emphasize her association with an idolatrous religion, that of worshipping Dagon.

*The first I saw at Timna*. On Samson's first wife, see Judges 14: 4-20.  
*motion'd*. Compare to Samson's "rouzing motions" (line 1382) before he pulls down the temple. According to the *OED2*, "motion'd" can mean "inward prompting" or "stirring of the soul." In this instance such "stirring" would be caused by God.

*She proving false*. Milton here neglects to retell part of the Samson story: After the woman of Timna betrayed him, he set the Philistine fields on fire by attaching

torches to foxes' tails. In revenge, the Philistines burned Samson's wife and her father. See Judges 15: 1-6.

*specious/snare*. In this line Samson characterizes Dalila. Compare this description to Satan being specious in the Serpent (*Paradise Lost* 9.361) and Satan's gifts being specious in *Paradise Regain'd* 2.391. Also note the similarity to Eve naming herself Adam's snare after the Fall in *Paradise Lost* 11.165.

*my self*. Compare this assumption of responsibility to Adam and Eve eventually blaming themselves, not each other, for their own sins. See *Paradise Lost* 10.958-59.

*vanquisht with a peal of words*. Compare this to Milton's sense of the cause of Adam's original sin: "Fondly overcome with female charm" in *Paradise Lost* 9.999.

*Governours*. Samson's words here contradict the Biblical account of his life, which states that he ruled Israel for twenty years himself. See Judges 15: 20 and 16: 31.

*the rock of Etham*. See Judges 15: 8.

*trivial weapon*. That is, the famous jawbone of an ass.

*love Bondage more then Liberty*. For Milton's explicit theories of political liberty, see the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*; see also Michael's theory of the connection between personal and political corruption in *Paradise Lost* 12.83-101.

*Succoth and the Fort of Penuel*. The people of these cities refused to help Gideon pursue the fleeing Midian kings; see Judges 8.

*ingrateful Ephraim*. The people of Ephraim refused to help Jephtha against the Ammonites; Jephtha later slew them (Judges 11-12).

*Shibboleth*. When Jephtha's men of Gilead were testing Ephraimites who had escaped, they used this word because the Ephraimites could not pronounce it.

*Lines 293-294*. The Chorus here echoes Revelation 15:3 and *Paradise Lost* 1.26.

*heart of the Fool*. See Psalms 14: 1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

*ravel*. That is, "to entangle, confuse, perplex," as defined in *OED2*.



*Line 306.* In the UMI microfilm copy of 1671, this line is double-indented; the Rauner Library copy shows it flush left.

*obstriction.* That is, national law. Deuteronomy 7.4 indicates that marriage between Hebrews and the surrounding tribes of Canaan can be considered idolatry. See *On Christian Doctrine* for Milton's interpretation of that text. The poem seems uninterested in the problem that bothered Francis Quarles in his *History of Samson* (1631): how it was that Samson, a Nazarite, could kill with impunity, since, according to Numbers 6, a Nazarite could not touch dead bodies, let alone kill men or touch the carcass of a dead lion.

*Unclean.* All Gentiles were considered ritually unclean. In Ezekiel 4: 13, the bread that the Israelites eat while among the Gentiles is "defiled."

*Unchaste.* The Chorus's words here seem false: The Woman of Timna "was given to his [Samson's] companion" (Judges 14: 20). She did not go of her own accord. Thus it is difficult to label her actions as unchaste.

*inform'd. guided.* See *A Mask* lines 179-80: "where else/ Shall I inform my unacquainted feet?".

*Line 360.* See Luke 11: 11.

*nor was at all surpris'd.* Again, compare this to Adam's fall in *Paradise Lost* 9.998-99: "not deceiv'd".

*spurious first-born.* Dalila conceived corruptly because she went to Samson's bed driven by the desire of wealth that the Philistines offered her to betray him. See Judges 16: 5.

*foul effeminacy.* Again, compare this estimation of manly virtue lost to that of Adam in *Paradise Lost* 11.634.

*Divine Impulsion.* Manoa here casts doubt on the divine inspiration that prompted Samson's first marriage.

*over-potent charms.* See "Fondly overcome with female charm" in *Paradise Lost* 9.999.

*I do acknowledge and confess.* This mimics the confession of sin from the *Book of Common Prayer 1559*: "acknowledge and bewayle oure manifolde synnes and wyckednesse."

*connive*. The OED2 defines "connive" both as to remain dormant or inactive" and "to shut the eyes to crime or wrong." Merritt Hughes prefers the second reading, comparing it to Paradise Lost 10.624.

*thy ransom*. There is nothing about ransom in the biblical story in Judges.

*Lines 499-501*. Milton here describes the myth of Tantalus, who was sent to Hades for revealing secrets of the gods, according to Euripides in Orestes 1.

*God will relent*. Manoa echoes Mammon's mistaken supposition in Paradise Lost 2.237-38: "Suppose he [God] should relent/ And publish Grace to all."

*imploing mercy*. Milton did not share the commonplace early modern belief that Judaism was a religion without any concept of mercy. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare's Venetians all share this misconception of Jews and Judaism (Merchant 4.1.71).

*instinct*. Innate impulse. See Paradise Lost 10.263.

*Sons of Anac*. The giants mentioned in line 148 above.

*venereal trains*. Traps of erotic desire.

*tame Weather*. According to the OED2, a male sheep or castrated male sheep. Milton creates a weak, vulnerable, ridiculous image of Samson as a shorn sheep. Furthermore, this image refers to Judges 16: 19, in which Dalila has a man shave locks of Samson's hair as he is sleeping in her lap, after which he loses his strength. See also Antonio's line from The Merchant of Venice 4.1.116.

*Thou couldst repress*. Part of the Nazarite vow of purity to which Samson subscribed required abstention from drink. See Numbers 6: 3.

*Lines 541-546*. In short, Samson could easily abstain from drink, but had difficulty resisting sexual temptation. Compare this to the temptations in A Mask 524-526.

*Line 548*. 1671 has a period after "pure"; since this renders Samson's first sentence a fragment, it looks like a printer's error. I have supplied a comma instead.

*milkie*. This adjective is also used to describe fresh water in Paradise Lost 5.306. This phrasing creates an image of earth as mother. See Song of Solomon 5: 12.

*fumes*. Effects of food and/or drink on the body and mind. Compare to *Paradise Lost* 9.1050 where "unkindly fumes" from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge put Adam and Eve into a deep, unnatural sleep.

*temperance*. For Milton's definition of temperance, see *Christian Doctrine* 2.4 and *Paradise Lost* 11.531-32.

*Effeminatly*. To be effeminate here does not mean to be like a woman so much as it means to be swayed by feminine charms, to love women too much.

*Lines 558-572*. Some critics hear hints of Milton lamenting his own situation after the Restoration by likening it to that of Samson in prison.

*caus'd a fountain*. See Judges 15: 18-19. Milton reads the passage as indicating the fountain rises from the ground rather than from the jawbone.

*locks*. A passage from Judges 16: 22: "Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven" puts forth the possibility that Samson's strength might return with the growth of his hair.

*My hopes . . . / In all her functions weary of herself*. This phrase echoes that of the melancholy Hamlet in Shakespeare's play: "How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable, / Seem to me all the uses of this world!" (*Hamlet* 1.2.137).

*Lines 581-598*. This exchange seems to echo a conversation in Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 2.438-48. Phineus replies to Jason "nor is there any remedy hereafter, for blasted are my sightless eyes. But instead of that may the god grant me death at once, and after death I shall take my share in perfect bliss."

*humours black*. That is, bilious or melancholy humours, according to traditional physiology.

*healing words*. Compare to the Nurse's misused healing words in Euripides' *Hippolytus* 1.478.

*reins*. Kidneys.

*accidents*. Symptoms.

*Alp*. A high mountain. In *Paradise Lost* 2.620, the fallen angels journey "O're many a Frozen, many a fierie Alpe."

*the uncircumcis'd*. Gentiles in general, but in this case the Philistines especially.

*truest fortitude.* Milton also praises patience as heroic in *Paradise Lost* 9.32-33 and pious in *Paradise Regain'd* 1.426.

*mood.* As a musical term. Compare to "In perfect *Phalanx* to the *Dorian* mood/ Of Flutes and soft Recorders" in *Paradise Lost* 1.550-51.

*what is man.* The phrase echoes the expostulations of the Psalmist in Psalm 8: 4-8: "what is man that thou art mindfull of him?" Hamlet's soliloquy also echoes this passage: "What a piece of work is a man" (*Hamlet* 2.2.319).

*To dogs and fowls a prey.* These lines resemble the *Iliad* 1.1 in which Homer writes that the dead from the Trojan war "made them themselves spoil for dogs and every bird" in "Hades".

*Like a stately Ship.* Compare to Ben Jonson's description of Lady Pecunia in *The Staple of News* Act II as "a galley, Gilt in the prow" wearing adornment that costs "as much as furnishing a fleet."

*Of Tarsus.* Tarsus was a Spanish commercial port famous for its impressive ships. The image is one of overweening pride.

*Javan.* Greece; named for Noah's grandson, Javan, the legendary progenitor of the Ionians. See *Paradise Lost* 1.505.

*Gadier.* Cadiz.

*surcharg'd with dew.* Compare to the daffodil, which supposedly filled during the rain and wept when overflowing. See "Lycidas" 150.

*Hyæna.* Proverbially deceitful animal. See Jonson's *Volpone* 4.6.2-3.

*a poysnous bosom snake.* An image similar to those Milton uses to describe bad marriages in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.

*both common female faults.* Milton endows Dalila with a misogynist conception of women as overcurious and unable to keep secrets, much like Chaucer's Wife of Bath, who tells the story of King Midas and his wife as proof that women cannot keep secrets (*The Wife of Bath's Tale* 945-982). Though Chaucer's Wife cites Ovid as her source, in Ovid's story, it is Midas's slave barber who reveals his shameful secret, not his wife (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11. 172-193).

*thou to thy self wast cruel.* Compare to Shakespeare's *Sonnet* 1.8: "to thy sweet self too cruel."

*Lines 800-802.* Dalila appears to be blatantly lying here because in Judges 16: 5, the Philistines ask Dalila to discover Samson's secret in order for them to "bind him to afflict him."

*Be not unlike all others.* But, of course, a Nazarite was one who was supposed to be "unlike all others" in his austerity.

*Love seeks to have Love.* See Cicero's definition of love in *On Friendship* 27.100.

*Priest...at my ear.* The Judges account mentions no priest. The image Milton presents of the priest is similar to that of Satan at Eve's ear in *Paradise Lost* 4.800. The angels find him "close at the eare of Eve" while she is sleeping. Equating a priest with the devil could be interpreted as one of Milton's attacks on Catholicism.

*circling wiles.* This image of snake-like movement recalls Satan's action in *Paradise Lost* 9.510-15.

*Lines 876-881.* This speech to Dalila mimics Shakespeare's *Othello* 3.3.83: "I will deny thee nothing" and 5.2.345: "lov'd not wisely, but too well."

*thou wast to leave/ Parents and cuntry.* See Genesis 2: 24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

*law of nature, law of nations.* Milton studied John Selden's work and praised it as "that noble volume written by our learned Selden, *Of the law of nature & of Nations*" in the second book of *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.

*trains, ginns, toyls.* All words for traps.

*fair enchanted cup.* This image equates Dalila with Circe (Homer's *Odyssey* 10.135-396) and her various Renaissance descendants including Comus (*A Mask* 50).

*Adders.* See Psalm 58: 4-5 for another example of the superstition that adders are deaf.

*tear thee joint by joint.* Compare to Polymestor's desire to "rend her [Hecuba] limb from limb" in Euripides, *Hecuba* 1125.

*double-mouth'd.* Fame or rumor, in Latin fama, is proverbially double-mouthed, speaking both good and ill reports. See, for example, Chaucer's *House of Fame*, especially 1023-1031.

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*the Circumcis'd.* The Israelites, the sons of Abraham.

*Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath.* Principal cities of the Philistines.  
*odours.* spices. See Jeremiah 34: 5.

*Jael.* Dalila refers, with unwitting irony, to the story of Deborah and her song of praise for Jael who slew the Canaanite general Sisera (Judges 4).

*beauty.* For Milton's notions of the power of female beauty, see Adam's remarks to Raphael in *Paradise Lost* 8.532-570.

*what it is, hard is to say.* The question of what women desire has been considered by men a riddle for many ages. This "riddle" is the burden, for example, of Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale* 905.

*thy riddle.* The riddle Samson posed to the Philistines at his first wedding at Timnah: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Samson allowed the men seven days to solve the riddle (Judges 14: 14).

*musings.* Misprinted "mu sing" in Rauner copy.

*Thy Paranymp.* While Samson is away (Judges 14: 20), his first wife sleeps with his best man.

*outward ornament/inward gifts.* On outward beauty and inward beauty and Milton's habit of gendering such features, see *Paradise Lost* 8.538-546 and 4.488-491.

*to wisest men and best.* That even the wisest and soberest men can be gravely mistaken in their marriage choices is one of Milton's chief themes in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.

*virgin veil.* Compare to *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* 1.3: "and who knows not that the bashfull muteness of a virgin may oft-times hide all the unlivelines and naturall sloth which is really unfit for conversation."

*to the man despotic power.* See the famous dictum in *Paradise Lost* 4.299: "Hee for God only, shee for God in him." Milton believed that female subjection to men was established in creation.

*female usurpation.* Milton held that Adam's original transgression was, in part, an improper subjection of himself, his "manhood," to his wife. See *Paradise Lost* 8.568-75, 10.144-156. Much of his account of Adam's first sin is derived

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from Genesis 3:17, where God prefaces his sentence on Adam with the words, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, . . ."

*The Giant Harapha.* Harapha is never mentioned in the scriptural narrative of Judges. He is Milton's own invention. His name may be derived from the Hebrew for giant, ha raphah. H. Loewe also notes that the Hebrew Rephaim, which means "giants" is actually a euphemism (derived from rapha, "to be weak") meaning "the flabby, powerless ones."

*His habit carries peace.* Habit means clothing, that is, he is unarmed.

*Gath.* The comma, which makes sense here, is missing in the Rauner copy; I have supplied it based on state 2 of signature N as described by Fletcher 4.33

*Og or Anak and the Emims.* Giants mentioned in the Bible (Deuteronomy 2: 10-11; 3: 11; Numbers 13: 33).

*Kiriathaim.* The Emims lived in this place (Genesis 14: 5).

*If thou at all art known.* An echo of Satan's boastful speech to Zephon in *Paradise Lost* 4.827-830.

*encounters.* The comma, which makes sense here, is missing in the Rauner copy; I have supplied it based on state 2 of signature N as described by Fletcher 4.33.

*listed field.* That is, in the lists, or tournament field.

*single me.* Challenge me to single combat.

*the unforeskinn'd race.* The Israelites, spoken with derision.

*in thy hand.* Within reach.

*assassinated.* Treacherously attacked, not actually killed.

*Brigandine.* Body armour composed of iron rings or small thin iron plates, sewed upon canvas, linen, or leather, and covered over with similar materials (*OED2*).

*Habergeon.* A sleeveless coat or jacket of mail or scale armour, originally smaller and lighter than a hauberk, but sometimes the same (*OED2*).

*Vant-brass.* A vambrace is defensive armour for the fore-arm (*OED2*).

*Greves.* Greaves are defensive armor for the shins (*OED2*).

*Gauntlet.* An armored glove (OED2).

*Weavers beam.* The wooden roller in a loom on which the warp is wound, or the roller on which the cloth is wound. Also see 1 Samuel 17: 7 (Of Goliath): "And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam."

*seven-times-folded shield.* Similar to the shield of Ajax (or Aias) in The Iliad, which was made of seven layers of bull's hide.

*disparage glorious arms.* Milton was fond of disparaging arms and the accoutrements of war and tournament; see Paradise Lost 9.27-41.

*ruffl'd Porcupines.* Compare to Shakespeare's Hamlet 1.5.19-20: "And each particular hair to stand on end,/ Like quills upon the fretful porpentine."

*I know no Spells, use no forbidden Arts.* Compare to the oath taken by parties in single combat: Selden, Duello 34: "that hee was free from all use of Art Magique, that he did not carry with him any hearbe, stone or other kinde of experiment of Witchcraft."

*those thirty men.* At his first wedding feast, Samson slew thirty Askalonites and gave their cothes to the Philistines who solved his riddle, thus keeping his bargain. The Philistines used Samson's wife to find the answer to the riddle (Judges 14).

*spies.* There is nothing in the book of Judges to indicate that the thirty "companions" were spies, although Josephus, in Antiquities 5.8, writes that they were "in pretence to be his companions, but in reality to be a guard upon him."

*the force of Conquest.* See Milton's theory of tyranny in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.

*defies thee thrice to single fight.* Pepys's account of the coronation of Charles II describes the medieval custom of challenging three times in judicial combats: "the Champion flings down his gauntlet, and all this he do three times in his going up toward the King's table."

*To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.* Harapha implies that he is of too high a rank to fight with a common slave such as Samson.

*Baal-zebub.* Harapha swears by Beelzebub, the "god of the flies," one of the many forms of the Philistine God Baal whose shrine was at Ekron. In Paradise Lost, Beelzebub appears as the chief of Satan's companion devils (Paradise Lost 1.81).



*van. Vanguard.*

*Astaroth.* Now Harapha swears by another pagan deity, the fertility goddess Astarte, female counterpart to Baal. See Milton's "Nativity Ode."

*crest-fall'n.* As Flannagan notes, literally, Harapha's knightly crest has toppled when faced with Samson's strength.

*Goliah.* Goliath, whom David fought and slew with a sling and "five smooth stones" (1 Samuel 17).

*Heroic magnitude of mind.* Compare this to *Paradise Lost* 9.31-32.  
*patience.* That is, suffering, and waiting upon God.

*Saints.* Holy people, or "the elect," in the Protestant sense.

*Our Law forbids.* See the second of the ten commandments of the law (Exodus 20: 4-5).

*commands?* The Rauner copy has a period here instead of a question mark. The question mark is supplied based on the second state according to Fletcher 4.33.

*Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.* This maxim may be an echo of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1110a.

*that he may dispense.* Samson voices the conviction that God can dispense with any of his laws or commandments as he sees fit. This, Samson claims, was the case with his marriage to the Timnan woman. The Chorus agrees; see above, lines 307-314.

*Masters commands come with a power resistless.* How does this consist with Samson's earlier distinction between command and constraint, lines 1363-1376?

*Lines 1421-22.* See Horace, *Ars Poetica* 224: "The spectator, after the rites had been observed, was drunk and in a lawless mood."

*Spirit.* See Judges 8: 25.

*Lines 1461-63.* Milton takes this opportunity to attack priests, possibly in reference to his own opinion of the Catholic priesthood.

*Line 1488.* 1671 has a period here, which effectively orphans the following fragment; I have substituted a comma.

*those locks,/ That of a Nation arm'd the strength contain'd.* Compare to Ovid's Metamorphoses, 8. 15, where the security of the kingdom of Nisus depends on a lock of his hair.

*as next.* As next of kin, the tribesmen of Dan.

*What if.* These lines, from 1527-1535 and 1537, do not appear in the 1671 copy-text. They are supplied from a notice entitled "Omissa" provided on page 101, just before the Errata lists. The "Omissa" reads as follows:

Page 89 after verse 537. which ends,

*Not much to fear,* insert these.

Then follow the lines we have inserted as 1527-1535, including the speech prefixes. Then, the "Omissa" continues by specifying

After the next verse which begins, *A little stay,* insert this.

Then follows the line we have inserted as line 1537. The "Omissa" concludes with "Then follows in order, For evil news, &c." That is line 1538. For some interesting speculations on the "Omissa" and why these lines came to be omitted and resupplied in this manner, see Leah Marcus, Unediting the Renaissance, 179, and Stephen B. Dobranski, "Samson and the Omissa." *Line 1536*. Lines 1527-1535 have been supplied from the "Omissa" listed at the end of the volume; so also line 1537. 1671 has a comma at the end of 1536, but since with the omitted lines restored the line closes a speech, I have substituted a period. *rides post.* Travels quickly.

*O whither shall I run, or which way flie.* Refer to the Argument, where the Ebrew is said to enter "confusedly at first," echoing the manner in which many messengers bring bad news in Greek tragedies. See Euripides Phoenissae, 1335.

*Samson is dead.* Echoes the announcement of the death of Orestes in Sophocles's Electra 673.

*Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring/ Nipt with the lagging rear of winters frost.* One can hear echoes of Shakespeare here. See Love's Labour's Lost 1.1. 100-101.

*Inevitable cause.* Is Samson's death, then, a special kind of suicide, since he died by the same act that killed his enemies?

*Theatre.* Another departure from the scriptural version, in which the building is called a house (Judges 16: 25). George H. McLoone hypothesizes that Milton's word choice illegitimizes the Philistine religion, by making it an act put on in a playhouse.

*Cataphracts.* Soldiers in full armor.

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*arched roof.* Milton may have been influenced by his contemporary, Sandys, who said in his description of the ruins of Gaza in his *Travels*, "On the North-East Corner...are the ruines of huge arches sunk low in the Earth, and the other foundations of a stately building.... The Jews do fable this place to have been the Theatre of Sampson pulled down on the heads of the Philistines."

*Lines 1630-34.* See Judges 16: 26.

*as one who pray'd.* Compare to Judges 16: 30. The suicidal implications of this speech have long been an obstacle to those who would regard Samson as a saint. See also Judges 16: 26, "Let me die with the Philistines."

*Lords, Ladies, Captains, Councillors, or Priests.* Contrasted with the "vulgar" or the "throng" who survive the disaster.

*Line 1659.* This is not found in the Biblical account in Judges 16: 30. *dire necessity.* See Horace, *Odes*, 3.26.6.

*Lines 1667-68.* These lines echo Judges 16: 30

*Silo.* The ark of the covenant was located in Shiloh. 1 Samuel 4: 4 records its removal from Shiloh: "So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant."

*ev'ning Dragon.* A fire-drake: a meteorological event similar to the will-o'-the-wisp.

*that self-begott'n bird.* The Phoenix; see "Damon's Epitaph" 185-187 and *Paradise Lost* 5.272-274.

*Emboist.* The word most likely meant is "imboaked," which means hidden, concealed or sheltered in a wood or forest *OED2*.

*That no second knows or third.* Only one phoenix may be alive at once.

*Holocaust.* A sacrifice consumed by fire.

*Sons of Caphtor.* The Philistines were thought to have originally come to Canaan from Caphtor, or Crete.

*Nothing is here for tears.* If there is here no reason for tears, perhaps Manoa fails to perceive anything tragic in his son's death. See "Of that Sort of Dramatic Poem which is call'd Tragedy."

*Lines 1730-33.* See Judges 16: 31.

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*Home to his Fathers house.* Compare to the ending of *Paradise Regain'd* 4.639, where Jesus is "Home to his Mothers house private return'd."

*Laurel ever green.* Laurels were sacred to Apollo and a traditional crown of poets. See the opening lines of *Lycidas*.

*acquist.* Aquisition.

*Lines 1756-58.* Flannagan believes this is an example of "the Aristotelian catharsis or purging that was supposed to accompany the experience of witnessing a tragedy: a potentially harmful passion is purged, for the betterment of the citizen and the state."