

ABSTRACT

The present thesis deals with the development of the literary character of Satan in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The first part of the thesis, entitled *The Devil and the Question of the Origin of Evil*, aims to provide the reader with a basic orientation to the concept of the devil from the perspective of theology, philosophy and the literary canon of seventeenth-century European scholarship. This provides a background for reading *Paradise Lost*.

The second part of the work briefly introduces John Milton. In the chapter *The Initiation of John Milton*, attention is given to Milton's exceptional approach to his own poetic production. The interpretive analysis of *Paradise Lost* itself is introduced by the development of the reception of this work, followed by an analysis of selected passages from each book of *Paradise Lost* that is related specifically to the figure of Satan. The thesis presents multiple perspectives on the interpretation of *Paradise Lost*, since Milton also left the work largely open-ended, and it remains up to the reader to decide what approach to take.

The analysis shows that Milton dynamized the figure of Satan, opening it up in terms of meaning. This is followed by the third part of the thesis, which uses selected works of classical literature in a cross-section of time to show the legacy of Milton's Satan and the development of the figure of the devil in literature in general. From the perspective of this thesis, it can be concluded that the figure of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a true literary milestone.