LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

# Literary Influences in Contemporary Dance: Performing Masculinity in *Paradise Lost*

A dissertation on a dance theatre play by Samir Calixto, based on John Milton's poem, submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

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by

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## Abstract

Taking Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667), Samir Calixto in his dance-theatre play of the same title offers a new interpretation of an old order. In his work, God is a vain tyrant, Satan a tragic hero, Adam a weak marionette, and Eve a brave leader who, with determination and hope, guides Adam out of the Paradise towards enlightenment and a new beautiful world. This thesis aims to examine the difference in portrayal of gender roles in the two works. The main research question seeks to explore performance of gender roles in the background of gender studies and literary criticism on Milton. The sub-questions investigate how literature influences dance and what is the relationship between the two art forms; how the physicality of dance and lack of dramatic text affect possible interpretations; and whether Eve can be seen as *the* embodiment of the masculine. The emergence of modern dance, particularly understood as a form not based on narrative, is described along with the notion of intermediality and postdramatic theatre. A conceptual base regarding gender theory and adaptation studies is set out with examples from Milton's poem before an in-depth analysis of Calixto's performance.

# Chapter One: Introduction to the relationships between dance and literature

## 1.1: Intermediality of theatre and the development of dance as an independent form of fine art using ideas derived from Natya and Aristotle to modern scholars such as Chiel Kattenbelt

The romance between literature and dance within theatre has been long and manifold. Since ancient times physical re-enactments of folk stories have been present and known to scholars through archaeological artefacts such as cave paintings and representations carved or painted on ancient ceramics. Later, when purpose built theatres were being erected, plays started to be written especially for the purpose of performance – be it of an entertaining, political, or spiritual nature. From ancient times until now the art of performance has incorporated several means of carrying meaning: whether on a Broadway stage or in a remote Tibetan village, acting usually involves speech and physical movement, often accompanied by music and structured dancing. More often than not, the art of painting, sculpture and mechanics is involved in creating the right set design too. Two seminal works on drama, which greatly influenced the Indo-European traditions of aesthetics, bear witness to the above.

Possibly the most well-known treatise is Aristotle's *Poetics,* dating back to fourth century BCE, which outlines the art of creating different genres of dramatic representation – from tragedy, comedy and satire to lyric and epic poetry. It explains manifold components of a theatical play and stylistic devices in text, such as meter, harmony, musical rhythm and melody, characterization and various modes of representation and acting. Equally important, yet somewhat overlooked in Western academia is Bharatamuni's *Natya Shastra* from around the first century CE[1]. Natya in Sanskrit is the name for the trinity of dance, music and theatre (which further incorporates the former two and literature); shastra means rules or the science of. Broad in its scope, and covering many subjects relating to art, this work meticulously prescribes the art of creating a performance – from the modes of representation as detailed as movements of the dancer's pupils, to the qualities of a spectator, to aesthetic concepts such as the Rasa Theory (which explains the emotional and mental states that art can induce[2]). Both of these works testify to the multidimentionality of theatre over centuries and across cultures.

1 The scripture, or its compilation attributed to Bharata, is difficult to date and considered to be a surviving part of a now-lost fifth Sanskrit Veda (one of the books of knowledge that form the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature). Different sources provide different estimations but Kapila Vatsyayan, a leading scholar of classical Indian arts, maintains in her seminal work *Bharata: The Natyasastra* (1996) that the texts comprising the *Natya Shastra* were written between 1 BCE and 3 CE (6).

2 For a comprehensive overview of the Rasa Theory see my article “The Rasa Theory: an Analytical Tool from Sanskrit Aesthetics” published in *Dans Wetenschap in Nederland.*

The close relationship between different art forms within the medium of theatre has been perhaps most adequately expressed by a contemporary scholar Chiel Kattenbelt, who regards "different arts as media" and describes three types of mediality in his article *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance: Definitions, Perceptions and Medial Relationships*:

> *Multimediality* refers to the occurrence where there are many media in one and the same object; *intermediality* refers to the co-relation of media in the sense of mutual influences between media; and *transmediality* refers to the transfer from one medium to another medium (media change) (Kattenbelt 20-21).

Since these concepts, according to Kattenbelt, do not necessarily exclude each other but serve more as approaches to studying art phenomena, we can discuss dance and literature (the two arts of importance in this thesis) in terms of the nature of their relationship, the extent of their mutual influence, and their potential – when they come together and alter their independent nature – for creating an object (or perhaps yet another medium) which in its end form departs from the traditionally strictly defined forms of fine art, and which is capable of creating that "in-between space – «an inter» – from which or within which the mutual affects take place" that Kattenbelt calls intermediality (26).

If we consider dance an independent art form, rather than merely a component of a traditionally known theatrical production, we can look at its relationship with literature from multiple angles. In the peculiar case of Milton's and Calixto's *Paradise Losts*, I will recurrently ask throughout this paper, and perhaps answer with different results, questions relating to multi- and intermediality, mostly: whether the two media forms they employ exist as part of the same object – i.e. theatre performance; and whether there is a (co-)relation resulting from their (mutual) influence. Since these concepts are closely related, the subject of transmediality will be tackled in the section on art adaptation and appropriation.

## 1.2: Emergence of modern and contemporary dance, particularly understood as a form not based on narrative

We know that dance can be, and often is, a part of a larger theatrical performance. We also know that it can stand alone as an independent art. As such it may incorporate other forms of art – or media if we follow Kattenbelt's train of thought. The division line is very thin, if any could be identified at all. Perhaps it is more useful to talk about dance and theatre as being split off from each other by means of a blurry border – at times less, at other times more distinguishable. There have been attempts to distinguish and classify dance in its various forms alongside other performing arts. Hence, we have classical ballet, contemporary ballet, modern dance, contemporary dance, postmodern dance, conceptual dance, dance theatre, movement theatre, physical theatre, etc., the list is endless. Not to mention the participatory dances such as jazz or various forms of folk which often appear on the theatre stage. Since it is generally agreed that the maker claims the genre of their work, and since the classification of the performing arts is not of much relevance to my topic, I will not devote much space to it. Having said that, however, it is essential to introduce the reader to certain concepts and a degree of dance history in order to proceed further in the investigation of the relationship(s) between dance and literature.

Every form of dance has rhythm, and even though it may not look like on the first glance in some contemporary works, there is always, one way or another, some form of time keeping. And even if the rhythm of the dance does not match that of the accompanying music, time is its inherent feature, alongside with space and body. There is an anecdote about Jerome Bel, famous for his deconstructive choreographies, having his dancers learn another author's older piece from video in order to reference is it in his own performance. They dissected every single move, spatial orientation, dynamics and copied the timing, but for some reason it just did not work. Committed to his vision, and quite desperate at that point, Bel invited Susanne Linke – whose work he was attempting to appropriate – to visit him in France and watch. “It was so funny” she said, “they weren't counting”.[3]

There are opposing views on whether dance emerged as a response to music, or whether music was created to accompany dance. Since the ancient Egyptian times until Renaissance Europe, and even in some circles nowadays, the prevalent assumption is that dance came to exist as a way of mimicking the musical rhythm – for example during religious rituals when, accompanied by

3 The story is related in Jonathan Burrows' *A Choreographer's Handbook*, brilliant not only in advice on creative design but a self-help book to life in general, with all its quirky mental aspects.

rhythmic chanting, participants' bodies would sway or swirl to the point of hypnotic trance. The strongest opponent of treating dance as secondary to music was one of the pioneers of modern dance Ted Shawn. In his book *Dance We Must* (which has been a seminal work on dance theory, its philosophical backgrounds, illustrated with practical insights, and which formed the basis of modern dance scholarship), he writes that dance "was the first art of the human race, and the matrix out of which all other arts grew". He further extends this view on the relationship with literature explaining that "metre in our poetry today is a result of the accents necessitated by body movement, as the dancing and reciting were performed simultaneously" (50). Even though we cannot really know which came first, as the oldest artefacts testifying to the existence of dance are merely 9000 years old,[4] it makes sense to assume that dance came before music (by music is meant a collection of sounds organised by humans into a purposefully designed and further controlled rhythmical structure), since the very human body must have been present prior to any invention or discovery it made. An equally valid assumption is that dance and music might have emerged, and most likely did, in response to the sounds and rhythmical movements of nature, through imitation. After all, Aristotle claims – refuted by an army of scholars, further refuted by an army of their colleagues – that all art is imitation.

Skip forward seven thousand years and we witness Indian classical dance (from henceforward referred to as 'ICD') evolve in the sub-continent, and another seventeen centuries later, ballet in Europe. The reason these two classical styles are worthy of mention next to each other in this brief review of modern dance history is that they both strongly shaped its evolution. It is unlikely that the reader is unfamiliar with the contribution of ballet towards modern dance, but many are surprised to learn that it is actually ICD which shaped ballet into a fusion style from which contemporary dance evolved. Literature, and theatre, were involved as well; but let us start from the beginning.

Before ballet came to exist as ballet, as we now understand it, and ICD as ICD, both belonged – in their more primitive, unstructured form – within the scope of theatre (or various sorts of courtly spectacles), and natya (the trinity of dance, music and theatre). In 16th and 17th century France and Italy, the pre-ballet was a form of participatory dance for the nobility. Louis XIV, known as a talented dancer himself, began to record and codify these intricate performances and soon founded the first school for professional dancers, who would later replace the participants. This changed the nature of the dance from participatory into concert, thus giving birth to ballet as a stand-alone form of theatrical art. ICD has been codified – with its dozens of body and feet

4 A comprehensive overview of dance origins can be found in *Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World,* ed. Jonathan Dewald, vol. 2, pp 94–108.

positions, hand and face gestures, costume and even make-up – and written down for the first time in the previously mentioned *Natya Shastra*. Since then it has enjoyed an independent status as a spiritual temple dance in Southern India, and a lavish court spectacle in the North. Having different features, the two regional varieties further evolved into eight different classical dance styles officially recognized nowadays (and not to be confused with folk dances).

In 1904 a group of dancers from Northern India came to perform in Coney Island. Their shows, being totally different from anything else that was on the agenda, became very popular among the avant-garde bohemian society with which the first pioneers of American modern dance associated. Ruth St. Denis, considered the mother of modern dance, started working with the travelling troupe and soon became famous for her fusion choreographies that were inspired by the intricate and exotic style of Indian performers. St. Denis' most acclaimed work, which earned her recognition as a revolutionary choreographer for decades to come, as well as one of the first few that were recorded, was *Radha* based on the life of one of the avatars of *the* Goddess, or universal female energy, in Hinduism. It featured St. Denis with several Indian classical dancers in a production which rooted the form very much in the ground (to put it simplistically), as opposed to the lightness of ballet. The fact that these dancers were almost completely unrecognised for their input throughout the 20th century is a matter of great controversy as more evidence come to light. Scholar Priya Srinivasan, in her book *Sweating Saris*, tracks down the authorship of *Radha* and other important early works of American modern dance, to find out one of the dancers, Mohammed Ismail, who toured with St. Denis for several years along with many other unnamed Indian dancers attempted to sue her for his contribution. However, due to his nationality was unsuccessful in his attempt for justice and quickly forgotten (23). Srinivasan paints a very refreshing picture of how early American modern dance became popular, through not only St Denis' early Oriental dances but a whole unrecognised movement of Indian influences, enough to form an alternative to – or even resistance – ballet, independent dance style which further inspired generations of choreographers to grow into prolificacy of styles we nowadays study in Western academia.

Meanwhile in Europe, towards the end of the romantic period in music, ballet saw the dawn of non-rhythmical period of its development, which can be more precisely described as non-synchronised rhythmically with music. This was mostly due to the fact that musical compositions were becoming more elaborate, multi-layered and experimental, which did not allow full synchronisation with dance steps. This facilitated the emergence of new ideas about ballet and its higher level of independence – this time not from overarching medium of theatre, but from music. Initially few scenes of non-representational (non-storytelling) dance sequences were allowed – so called *ballet blanche*. Over time, as norms and expectations relaxed, these combined with the

relative freedom from music, culminating in probably the most infamous ballet of all times and one that changed dance history for ever – Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913). Performed until today in countless adaptations, the original piece caused a riot during its première at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Not only was the story – of a peasant girl in rural Russia frantically dancing herself to death in a pagan sacrificial ritual – considered unworthy of the high stage, but also the base, sexual, contorted movement was deemed unacceptable by the high-brow audience. As might be expected, this only brought the piece a desired international attention and allowed it to travel across countries and continents to be picked up and to inspire – just like the ICD in America – a new movement worldwide.

There have been of course countless other factors and influences which shaped what we now consider under the collective term contemporary dance, and the process of its development is by no means coming to an end. So far three periods have been distinguished, which continue to exist alongside each other with numerous crossovers and fusions in style and technique. The first period is characterised by a sharp departure from classical ballet, a search for new ways of expression outside of the strict code, movement closer to the ground, foreign influences, fusions and experiments but still a lack of coherent technique. This time, the beginning of 20th century, saw the work of pioneers such as Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Loie Fuller, and Isadora Duncan. The second period falls roughly between the twenties and forties when a new generation of choreographers strove to forge a unique style, vocabulary and technique. Many, such as Martha Graham or Doris Humphrey, managed to develop a clearly recognisable style and distinctive teaching technique used in dance training to this day. Finally, from the late fifties and early sixties on, there has been expansion of abstract styles by such renown choreographers as, among many others: Jose Limon of the Limon counterpoint technique, famous for *The Moor's Pavane* (1949, based on Shakespeare's *Othello*); expressionist dance pioneer Mary Wigman, inventor of the Kinetography movement notation; Rudolf Laban, the father of eurythmics; Emile Jaques-Dalcroze; and, in particular, Merce Cunningham – whose collaboration with a minimalist composer John Cage broke ground for yet another movement form to emerge, namely postmodern dance.[5]

Just as modern dance grew out of a reaction against strict rules of ballet and its superficial weightlessness, so did postmodern dance emerge as a refusal of the training techniques and rules of composition developed in the modern period.[6] Cunningham was the first to create his dances completely independent from music. He and Cage, in their life-long partnership, made choreography and score separately, which only came together on the night of the performance. Not

5 This summary is based on, and further expanded in Joshua Legg's *Introduction to Modern Dance Techniques.*

6 Postmodern dance aesthetics align more accurately with modernist period in other arts, although future developments catch up with postmodernism and are considered under one umbrella term in dance terminology.

only did music and dance exist independently from one another, but also each musical sequence, and every sound within it, were independent and created for its own sake, without apparent purpose and with no connection to the receding sound or sequence, or to anything at all for that matter. As such, Cage's music was what we could call the essence of soundscape - a backdrop that may, or may not, influence the scene happening in the foreground. Both the seeming lack of a rhythmical flow in Cage's compositions, as well as its complete unrelatedness to the movement happening in the same space-time, subversively brought to light the inherent musicality of dance in Cunningham's compositions. He challenged the assumption that dancers must dance to music – a notion which for majority of contemporary theatre audience still holds true and, unfortunately, stops them from fully appreciating dance as an independent art. Cunningham's work was less focused on narrative, and celebrated dance through the appreciation of technique based choreography, innovative integration of other arts in light design, set and costume. Because of the strong reliance on technique his work is classified as modern despite Cunningham's progressive creative process rooted in postmodernist ideology. The shift from modern to postmodern in dance was marked by the latter rejection of reliance upon technique – be it modern, ballet, or any other concert or participatory style. All kind of ordinary movement, including daily chores or walking, became to be considered dance and every person regardless of their physical capabilities was considered a dancer. The most notable and prolific postmodern establishment was Judson Dance Theatre – an art collective in the sixties that produced over two hundred pieces, many with untrained dancers and based on ordinary movement, in collaboration with and employing methodological and aesthetic ideas across different art forms. Improvisation – structured to a greater or lesser extent – became the prevalent technique which is still much incorporated, or juxtaposed, with other forms of movement, often within one and the same performance. There is a heated debate, and perhaps a beginning of a sort of schism, in 21st century dance practice and scholarship, whether technique should still be taught at all in dance education. This is perhaps most notably reflected in the emergence of (government funded) university programs, such as for example the School for New Dance Development (SNDO) in Amsterdam, which takes as the base of their curriculum the “respect for the individual and his/her liberty to develop a personal approach, style, esthetic (sic), signature and view”[7]. The legacy of all these shifts in style, time periods, new genres, lives on in the contemporary dance in divers forms and informs current choreographic practice and dance scholarship to a large degree, as we shall see in the forthcoming dance analysis of *Paradise Lost*.

7 http://www.ahk.nl/en/atd/dance-programmes/sndo/about-sndo/

### 1.2.1: Modern dance as an example of what Thies Lehman later described as postdramatic theatre

Postdramatic theatre is a notion that refers to performance art which is not based on a dramatic text or epic, and despite *Paradise Lost* being based on *Paradise Lost*, this concept deserves introduction due to the non-narrative quality of contemporary dance. The term was introduced by Hans-Thies Lehman in his critical 1999 book *Postdramatic Theatre* to describe the phenomenon happening across modern and postmodern performing arts from the sixties on, which saw a rapid departure from its reliance on a previously conceived narrative. His work is a continuation of Peter Szondi's work on the "crisis of drama" expounded in *Theory of the Modern Drama,* which postulated that the themes and subjects suitable to modern epic could no longer be portrayed within the constraints of Aristotelian drama. In fact, the word 'portrayal' is what both Szondi and Lehman find most problematic. It goes back to 16th century Europe when theatre was based on dialogue, and constituted a one sealed-off world on its own on stage. This way of doing theatre persisted at large until the developments of 20th century theatre which reflected the current post-war disillusionment and the questioning of the social status quo. The works created in early modernism – whether theatre, dance, or anything in between and beyond – no longer could, or wanted to, be a mirror which merely represented – portrayed – a pretty world on stage in which we could cherish our fixed selves. They undermined and transcended everything that was known to be good theatre, or dance for that matter. Enter Lehman, who points out limitations in Szondi's theory about the "crisis of drama". Even though he agrees with most of it, he points out that "this model does not allow Szondi to imagine theatre without drama, i.e. without the representation of a closed-off fictional cosmos, the mimetic staging of a fable" (Lehman 3). The fact that Szondi analyses early modernist works in terms of rejection, or opposition to, traditional dramatic requirements traps him in the vicious circle of perpetuating the very model he aims to dismantle. In Lehman, there is a shift of focus from theatre as acting out literature to theatre as performance with (or without) literature as one of its components, but not reliant on the literary text (or script) for its coherence. The emergence and accessibility of new media naturally played a great role in liberating theatre from drama, which brings us back to Kattenbelt's concept of intermediality. From the work of these two scholars it can be gathered that – because there exists co-relation of different media, and because the narrative no longer plays the leading role – contemporary dance, as exemplified in Calixto's *Paradise Lost*, even when it is based on a previously conceived narrative, goes beyond being a mere adaptation, but rather treats the narrative as another actor – equal with light, space, body, and music, that can be toyed with and manipulated in order to create a new understanding –

and not only of the old appropriated work – but a new independent original vision only vaguely relating to the other.

# Chapter Two: Approaches to art adaptation

The one concept from Chiel Kattenbelt's mediality model I have not so far explored is transmediality. This concept is closely related to adaptation in that they inherently depend on the transfer of meaning into another medium. It is yet another way in which literature and dance form a relationship – as in the case of this thesis – that of '*being inspired by*'. This form of a relationship has the potential of being invisible – we know it exists because we have been told, read the program, recognised the title. But let us assume for a while that all these slipped our attention and the audience has never read or heard about *Paradise Lost,* nor is it familiar with the content of the Bible that would enable it to figure out the connection. (Similarly the lack of acquaintance with Vedas would limit most of western audience's understanding of the stories presented in Indian classical dance.) Given this lack of reference, that relationship ostensibly does not exists for us despite being there as it did inform the process of creation and the final outcome of the piece regardless of us being informed about it or not. I won't go into detail about the audience's various personal qualities and backgrounds, even though it is important when talking about adaptation. For the purpose of this thesis I will treat the audience-critic-receiver as a linking chain between two (or more) works whose background aligns with that of the maker's in capacity sufficient to recognise and connect the two works and art forms, and appreciate their interrelatedness and its outcome – intermediality, which nevertheless in its final shape will inevitably be influenced by each spectator's own background and gusto. But before we talk about the what and how of adaptation, let us get one thing out of way: fidelity.

## 2.1: Fidelity

In her article *On the Art of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon says that "audiences are more demanding of fidelity when dealing with classics"(111). But let's face it, how many people have read *Paradise Lost* legitimately to have the right to demand fidelity? The poem, due to its long-lasting presence in the literary canon has become something of a common cultural property – a piece loosely based on some parts of the Bible but daintier, more elaborate, lyrically ornamental. It takes a lot of time to read and to understand its language (whole university courses have been designed just for that). So really, how many readers does this text now have? The numbers are of course beside the point here, which is that the fidelity demand in case of PL manifests itself in the dance's non-narrative abstract expressionism which 'fails' to convey the story unless we are already

familiar with it. I'm sure readers of this paper are familiar but what about the audience in the theatre? *They* are the link between the two media / art forms, and *they* are the catalyst of the new meaning that arises from adaptation – whether intended by the choreographer or not. I will explore the issue of audience engagement and the choreographers' views about it later. More often than not, it is the adaptation that encourages viewers to refer to the original. I must admit I have not conducted a quantitative research to find out how many of the audience that saw PL read PL, but it is highly probable, and I dare to make that assumption on the basis on several personal slightly besotted interviews in the theatre foyer, that majority have only got as far as the Wikipedia summary of the plot.[8] In this case, the case of fidelity is not of much importance. But there is more to it, of course.

Despite all the calls for rejection of fidelity discourse in the studies of adaptation (and there are many more that the few exemplary ones mentioned here) it does seem to always happen to find its way into the spotlight somehow (see this thesis for example). J.D. Connor takes a step further in his article *The Persistence of Fidelity* by naming the culprit as "fidelity reflex", which is "not the persistence of the discourse, but the persistent call for it to end" (5). His argument is based on two principles. One is the obvious persistence of fidelity that is, still, all well and good, which in a way proves its invincibility and the futility of the attempts to exterminate it. The other one is that the calls to end it fail in fact to "bring freedom from comparison", which in itself is without benefit to academia, and instead only brings out a "typology of relationships" reflected in countless adaptation case studies whose only reason for existence is to "make film (or performance) acceptable to literature departments (that are) looking to maintain declining enrolments in the humanities" (6-7). Now, this is quite a heavy accusation and certainly not without a point. Are all the case studies, including this thesis, really totally useless to academia? I could argue both for and against but since further research into this direction is beyond the scope of this thesis, all I will do to answer that question is to humbly defend all the papers contributing to systematisation of "typology of relationship" for the simple reason that – as we have seen even in the recent dance history – there has to be some kind of substantial body to be taken up by scholars in all their attempts of dissection, deconstruction, opposition, addition.... to invent something new – which perhaps is a task for PhD students, or Professors, clearly a task that Connor undertook, yet still re-using the old rhetoric he tries to dismount from its pedestal. Connor challenges the oblivion of the proponents of the calls to end with fidelity for good with two unquestionable facts:

- they blur mutational processes (9) by focusing on what was cut out or changed and judging the end result as a poor copy, which is a "terrible category error" because it should not be

8 Ethnographic approach is a widely-applied method in dance research – as described by Anya Peterson Royce in her classic textbook *The Anthropology of Dance* (2002), as well as across various disciplines – as exemplified by Pavel Zemliansky in *Methods of Discovery* (2008).

judged at all as a copy since changes are inevitable when shifting the medium. It all boils down to judgement and, according to Connor, "such rankings are impossible because there is an unbridgeable gap between media; (and) only fidelity discourse seems to require such impossible rankings" (10). Using a standard based on 'fidelity' in evaluating the quality of a work is an excuse not to do the hard job of actually trying to analyse the value of a piece of art – for which many valid standards exist. It is easier to say A is good because it resembles B (which has been deemed good by generations of others in case of classics), rather than to engage in a thorough examination of the work. Here I must agree with Connor who states that "a person who shifts the conversation from a discussion of merits to a discussion of matching demonstrates an anxiety about settling questions of art" and therefore this thesis, even though addressing some differences within the story, will not attempt to compare the two works but instead will try to explore the many relationships between them inevitably shaped by those changes (12). Another question arises when comparing: should we first look at the version which was created first, or the version that the (re)viewer first encountered? The obvious answer seems to be the work which was created first. However, if we have not read or seen it (like most of the PL audience) then our point of reference is the work which was created second. See discussion on audience engagement later.

– Secondly, Connor points out that no adaptation scholar has ever paid attention to the "role fidelity discourse plays in the layman's discussion" which according to him is not so much concerned with judging the reworked piece as much as it is an "attempt at an objective justification of the prior evaluation" (15). This brings us back to my first reflection where I have pointed out that 1) many audiences do not actually have the reference to judge the adaptation so we cannot in fact even talk about fidelity judgement, as well as 2) which work is actually the first one to stand for the reference point. But it also highlights the importance of considering the layman response in the academic discourse. As I have mentioned earlier, the spectator is the link between the two works, the space within his imagination, shaped/augmented by constant negotiation of the familiar and the unexpected, is where the *inter(mediality)* happens, it is where the value of an adaptation is produced, nurtured, and comes to light in the external world in the form of communication with other – lay or not – men. This valuing (or disregard) may be manifested in various forms – verbal utterance in the afore-mentioned theatre foyer (not always besotted), Facebook posts, blogs, or a newspaper review (most reviewers are not scholars, after all). For this reason, the layman discourse cannot simply be shunned – as it has often been – in academia. The role of this discourse, as Connor indicated, has a different nature than those existing in – and refuted by – professional circles. He explains that "comparisons are the first steps toward theorisation

> […] worth the effort of professionalisation" but are discarded in the call to abandon fidelity discourse altogether, which in itself is an attempt to squander the growing influence (especially commercial) in a patronising manner by the learned "middle-class moralists" (17,20).

So can we simply ignore fidelity and the calls for its end? Not entirely. Because to talk about any relationship the qualities of the two (or more) entities need to be described ahead. This does not however mean that it has to be done in a comparative fashion. Instead, what is needed is a thorough examination of what happens in-between – the *inter*.

To conclude, and in agreement with Hutcheon, I will adopt in my thesis her stance that "the whole rhetorics of fidelity is less than adequate to discuss the process of adaptation" (2006: 20), for the reason that an adaptation may not be good or successful is not the lack of fidelity but the lack of originality to conceive of something new. Since the very reason people enjoy adaptations is the familiarity and the surprise, a successful adaptation can not simply emulate. Different media inevitably carry a surprise because of what they can do but a simple re-telling or re-showing of the story is not enough to captivate the audience. So, let us adhere to and obediently follow the arguments above to quit the discussion, as well as Connor's call to quit the call for quitting and move on to exploring what different media can do to an art work and how they engage the audience.

## 2.2: Different media and modes of engagement

In the process of moving from text to stage there is the substantial omission of words that is perceived as a loss. This perception of loss is nurtured by the oblivion regarding what is gained in the process, to what new things become. However, if we employ a broader scope of judging criteria and look at the ways in which different media employ creative and communicative processes, we learn that the categories of loss and gain are erroneously employed in the discourse on adaptation. Different media present different possibilities for conveying meaning, telling stories, expressing feelings and emotions. They also engage the audience – be it readers, viewers or participants – in various ways. The choice of medium determines possibilities, which in turn determines the components. The text may indulge in intricate descriptions of a character's thought processes and emotions, surroundings, current events and actions, and his resulting emotions – all of which can take several pages of text that may take a few hours to read but can be expressed in seconds by a skilled actor on stage with an effective design. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon categorises all arts in three modes of engagement: telling – such as literature, showing – such as performing arts, and interactive – such as computer games (xiv). And despite popular opinions that

some of these modes are more valuable than others, she makes a point that all three are equally immersive but through different operating mechanisms.

The telling mode, as in the example of novels, short stories, comic strips, but also paintings, engages the viewer through making meaning from various symbols (black shapes on a piece of paper, or lines and colours on a canvas) and stimulating his "imagination in a fictional world" with abundance of implicit meanings (22). To give an example, on a most basic level, the text can describe in detail how a character looks like but it cannot imagine it for us since every reader will have a different idea of someone:

*With head uplift above the wave, and eyes*
*That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides*
*Prone on the flood, extended long and large* (PL I.193-195)

And on the other hand, while a drawing in a book can bring us closer to this imagination it is bound to represent only one or few stills from the character's life without all the events, thoughts and emotions happening in between throughout the novel. Sometimes, as in the case of painting (which also applies to a book cover or in-text illustration) the choice of one particular moment *is* what the author wants to express, and here the principle of imaginative engagement works in a reversed manner: certain visual aspects have already been imagined for us, but the entire inner world of the characters, and what happens around them is only implied for us to infer.

The showing mode operates on the level of "perception of the aural and the visual" where we have "moved from the imagination to the realm of direct perception" (Hutcheon 22-23). It is quite remarkable what humanity have achieved in the development of performing arts – be it film, theatre, or dance. The myriad of all the possible different media come together on stage, each with its own ways of making an impact, all interwoven in an intricate patterns which further influence each medium's own qualities: speech, music, light, movement, space, objects, deliberate absence of any of the above – all that comes together to express what cannot be expressed otherwise, and us – the audience – soaking up, being pervaded by this strange and beautiful ephemeral creation which has the power to make us feel and experience that which cannot be experienced otherwise. It truly is astonishing. Because of its ability to incorporate all other media, Chiel Kattenbelt designates theatre as a "hypermedium" (Kattenbelt 23). It is true however, that even though the stage is capable of incorporating possibly any mode of expression and communication, and nearly anything known to humans (in a limited scope, depending on production possibilities), and even though emotions or inner conflicts can be shown in a blink of an eye, and visual descriptions are cut out completely (except for a few experimental plays) saving immense amount of time, it cannot fully "approximate (…) the interlinking of description, narration, and explanation" that a narrative can through a whimsical textual interplay which can expose latent motives and hidden plots with such ease

(Hutcheon 23).

Lastly, the interactive mode, which is of less interest to us here (not because literature or dance are not interactive – as we have seen they too require our active participation, if not physical then intellectual and imaginative to say the least, but because the two works described in this thesis do not feature audience members as their integral part – something which is often the case in many performing art forms from poetry readings to site-specific theatre), employs "participatory mode in which we *also* engage physically with the story and its world" (Hutcheon 23). All sorts of digital interactive media fall under this category: from video games to 3D cinema to Augmented Reality tablet apps, but also role-play, quizzes or puzzle. This physical engagement presents challenges as well as opens up a way for new possibilities in story telling, neither of which should be considered in terms of loss and gain but in terms medium-specific qualities along which the maker can chose his options.

Hutcheon argues for "expanding the scope of (adaptation) study to include all three modes of involvement" in order to be able to adequately investigate how "different media deal with elements like point of view, interiority/exteriority, time, irony, ambiguity, metaphors and symbols, and silences and absences"(xv). These three modes of involvement may not necessarily exclude one another, but rather influence in a complementary way. A striking book cover – painting on its own – will inevitably render our experience of the text. Similarly the text will tell us a great deal about that illustration which could only be inferred prior to reading it. Both the image and the narrative are separate entities, yet as they come together they transform into a text-image entity which functions in a new way different to the mere assemblage of its parent media. Comic books or graphic novels are a great example, and children's books with no text but full-page pictures with minute details take that to extreme. Similarly, if we look at the two PLs, they which function separately as 1) literary narrative using text as its medium to tell the story and 2) stage production using dance, music and light to show the story (or its certain aspects). But when we put them alongside, and mould into a new entity in which these two, perfectly existing on their own otherwise, form a new object that uses not only the workings of dance and text to communicate, but the workings of dance and text influenced by one another and therefore rendered into a completely new mode of expression and engagement – a separate medium, or an integrated multi-media art object. What this object employs to communicate is intermediality – a concept which is not as much fixated on the media involved as on the dynamic relationship between them and the resulting space – the *inter* – negotiated equally by the author employed media and privately by the audience, which is the primary carrier of meaning. Having introduced medium specificity and modes of engagement I would like to proceed towards the process of translation from one medium/mode to another – specifically from telling to showing.

## 2.3: Adaptation as translation

The process of adaptation has often been compared to translation. Hutcheon distinguishes between adaptation as a product and as a process, and says that while in the product adaptation formal feature can be defined with ease, the process adaptation contemplates both “creation and reception” and calls for “other aspects to be considered” (2006:15). One of the essential aspects of translation – and adaptation – is that there can never be “such thing as literal translation” – and thus likewise there can be “no literal adaptation” (16). The act of converting a piece of literature between languages, or between different media is indeed an act of reception and creation. Just as different media have different ways to express the same meaning so do different languages. The fact that one language does not have a phrase describing certain state of things which another language has, does not preclude its users from experiencing and describing that state to each other through the conventions known to them. Therefore, a translator's – or adaptor's – job is not so much to find correlating words, gestures, or images, as it is to immerse himself in the work's meaning, to reach its core with all his perceptive abilities to the utmost fullest and then find ways to communicate this saturated state of knowing through the mastery of his language – be it movement or vocabulary.

One thing that language translations do not suffer from, as opposed to cross-media adaptations, is their perceived independent status. We don't see English version of Lehman's *Postdramatic Theatre* as an adaptation by Karen Jurs-Munby – the translator from German. We trust her professional expertise that she did her utmost not to slip in a shade of personal interpretation and so we consider the book an equivalent to *Postdramatisches Theater* – a work that contemporary theatre studies was essentially built on, even though majority of readers have not seen the original (for if they could read the original they would not be concerned with the English translation). The book is considered equivalent despite the quite remarkable fact that Jurs-Munby admits in the introduction to having “somewhat abridged” the book “with inevitable gains and losses” which do not however “affect the overall argument” (Lehman 15). Academia considers the book as the original in English version. It is indeed very peculiar that translations from text to performance – be it film or theatre, are generally held in low esteem. According to Robert Stam the reason for this state of affairs is two-fold. Firstly, literature enjoys a sort of “seniority” within arts. Although – as we have seen in chapter one of this thesis – performance and music existed long before languages were written, it is the fairly recent development of writing that has elevated the importance of written text to the level it holds across the globe (at least in scholarship). The other factor comprises of “logophilia” and “iconophobia” (58). The former is closely connected to the first reason and designates reverence of the words as venerable and the only means of expression truly worthy of praise in art. The later expresses scepticism towards meaning represented in an

image – perhaps due to its perceived vagueness of interpretation. I suppose that has something to do with accessibility and familiarity – in the end everybody (with the exception of unusual circumstances) has words at their free disposal and relative mastery, whereas images are granted to those privileged of talent, learning, or economic means to ownership.

### 2.3.1: Tell to show

In the translation from a telling to showing medium, the text must be converted into movement, objects, light (inevitable necessity demanded by the laws of physics to experience the former two) and optional sound (though most likely quite inevitable as well due to the nature of living organisms). The latter is perhaps the most mysterious agent in the newly reconstructed story, being helplessly attached to movement – be it walking or breathing, and taking myriad forms from speech to music to its purposeful absence that never really is void of itself. At its most obvious and accessible level – that is in the form of music (about which volumes have been written) – music often takes that part of the text's job which deals with moods, emotions and more or less defined "atmosphere" of the situation. Music in dance is another field of study on its own – and a field still grossly neglected in dance scholarship, sadly. I will write more about music on stage in the performance analysis section. For now it is essential to point out the various functions music can execute in the tell to show translation. It is also interesting to point out Milton's poem exceptional musicality – something which has been paid tribute to in Calixto's performance. The inherent musicality of the words that becomes apparent as we read *Paradise Lost* out loud, its enchanting rhythm, the sound of the air passing through one's lips gently sloshing through the thicket of consonants and gliding over sweet meads of vowels, are what make this magnificent work alive – it was meant to be performed. Perhaps the fact that Milton was already blind when writing PL contributed to his heightened aural sensitivity, since the darkness in which he lived is definitely reflected in the poem's sombre mood.[9] Philip Pullman in his introduction to the 2005 Oxford edition recalls a story of an old illiterate drunk listening to the poem's recitation in a local pub who despite not knowing anything about the story, nor understanding half of the words, was able to become transfixed in the narration and sympathise with the characters – in his own-appropriate way: "this Lucifer is a damned fine fellow, and I hope he may win!". Pullman's point is that, similarly as we don't need to know how the music is written in order to enjoy its sound, we don't necessarily have to understand every word, reference, or political commentary, in order to enjoy the poem's "incantatory quality" with its "rolling swells and peels of sound, powerful rhythms and rich

9 http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20170419-why-paradise-lost-is-one-of-the-worlds-most-important-poems

harmonies (…) that casts a spell" (Pullman 3). Wanting to retain the poem's musicality without loading the performance with yet another reference, Calixto collaborated with a composer Kate Moore in search for a fresh musical frame that would echo its timelessness with a classical style, yet also take upon the task of carrying meaning with a contemporary approach. With the change of medium comes the inevitable re-focusing within the parameters of the narrative. Not only due to the limited time and space that the performance medium has compared to the text, but also due to the adaptor's conscious choice of what to pick in order to make a statement.

The problem of size goes along with the problem of definition. Adaptations of some texts are considered worthy and enjoy criticism adequate to their medium, while others are blamed for profaning the source texts. Perhaps it is the intention with which the text was written, or the inclusion of stage directions. Is a dramatic play meant to be read or performed? Why do we read Shakespeare and why do we watch his plays? And most importantly, how do we judge what we see? Hutcheon says that "every live staging of a printed play could theoretically be considered an adaptation" regardless of whether that text tells the director how to carry out gestures or adjust tone of voice for a convincing representation of emotions. (2006: 39). The performers always have certain freedom how to adapt the text, which considering the aforementioned time and space constraints will result in a different effect than if the audience read the text. Calixto's focus lies in oppositions on a more complex level than the moralistic struggle between good and bad. Light and darkness in his PL signify internal struggles, insubordination, thirst for freedom, love, knowledge, leadership, and final acceptance, in ways that defy common expectations and long forged and accepted interpretations.

In the case of adaptation from text to dance "the moving body replaces the operatic voice as the primary conveyer of both meaning and emotion through music" (Hutcheon 2006: 42). This means that dance has one less operating mode at its disposal to carry meaning, as compared to traditional theatrical production which employs both the telling mode – in the form of speech, and showing mode – in the form of gestures and appearances. What it entails is that audiences come to the witness a performance with specific set of expectations. Coming to see a theatre play we expect both the visual and the verbal, and the pitch of actor's voice – for example – may completely alter how we perceive his character – which is one more means of engaging the audience that dance does not possess in its essence. Of course, the aural engagement is present in dance whether there is music or not, dancers may even talk or even scream, yet the verbal aspect present in dance is more abstract than in theatre – for if it wasn't it would not be dance but theatre. What comes with the shift onto the aural and visual in performance media is that they "lose internal character motivation" because of the compulsory externalization (42). Once again, this loss is lamented by critics immersed in fidelity discourse despite creating space for audiences' personal involvement through

personification with the characters where the inference of the motives happens at a private mental and emotional level for each individual alone.

# Chapter Three: Views from Gender Studies on performing gender roles

In order to discuss how masculinity is performed, and challenged in its portrayal in *Paradise Lost,* we first need to see what masculinity is, how it has been spoken about in academia, and how it has been generally conceived of in the broader public realm. The latter is a very important factor that determines the outcome of intermediality in this specific case study, due to the inevitable presence of the audience (lay and pro) required for its existence. When talking about gender roles, I will not delve into the direction of queer theory and gay/lesbian studies – not because they are totally irrelevant here but because this thesis aims to discuss how meaning is generated, and can be toyed with, against a backdrop of long-established assumptions present in the interpretation of individual/character's motives and behaviours based on pre-conceived gender roles (for we naturally tend to think that, for example, a reason for the same act must be fundamentally different in men and women), rather than the individual(character)'s personal relationship with his own gender identity. Having said that, it will be unavoidable not to mention this aspect at least briefly in discussing the stereotyping attached to gender in evaluating the content and, perhaps, the quality and status of the art work.

## 3.1: Gender as a performance

One of the most famous and internationally regarded gender scholars is Judith Butler, without whom any discussion of gender identity would be incomplete. Her theories build on the central idea – also expounded by earlier philosophers such as Simone de Beauvoir for example[10] – that gender is a performance, a "constructed identity" manifested in specific social acts that are shaped by collective social discourse. Butler's take on this idea include, most importantly, the notion of the "social agent as an object, rather than the subject of constitutive acts", as well as the critique of the fact that a notion of a biological binary sex informs the gender discourse by providing it with an unquestionable justification and reason for the original gender performance. In doing so, it seeks to invalidate feminist critique of a socially-constructed gender model, in particular through the erroneous blurring of gender with sex. As such she objects to the belief that we could conceive "the gendered self to be prior to its acts" (Butler 1988: 519-520).

Her most ground-breaking proposition is that gender, in fact, does not exist at all – at least not in the terms that are generally understood. That understanding entails a notion that gender is the

10 One of de Beauvoir's most famous quotes - "One is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman" comes from her classic 1949 book *The Second Sex* (p. 267).

inner psychological and emotional affiliation to the physical sex (that happens to correspond with it, or not – i.e. a man trapped in a woman's body), and is the true self of a person in the area of their sexuality. As such, gender is wrongly assumed to be, according to Butler, the *expression* of a pre-existing innate identity that is represented through various gender-specific acts (which are shaped by the collective social discourse). The problem with this theory for Butler is that gender is not really expressive of anything *a priori* and then shaped into performative acts by the environment, but instead it – the very idea of gender – is created through those performative acts which are shaped by the environment onto an unassuming object. The agency of intention to perform is an important underlying component in Butler's theory of gender performativity. A person's active participation in these social constructs – whether intentional or not, as well as their refusal or attempts at alteration, validate the very notion of gender as a social construct, rather than just a socially-shaped expression of identity. She contests the idea of a 'self' that is expressed in gender and instead claims that it is externally constructed: “that this self is not only irretrievably 'outside,' constituted in social discourse, but the ascription of interiority is itself a publicly regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication” within which “gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control” (528). It is no secret that in all societies, to a various extent, compliance with the gender expectations will be met with support, and failure or refusal to acquiesce – with punishment. Those who question the status quo are hardly ever approved, let alone applauded – Butler and Calixto being perhaps the exceptions that confirm the rule within their respective fields of work.

On this occasion, it is perhaps worth mentioning an incident at Gemeente Museum Den Haag when Samir Calixto was asked to cover his dancer's breasts due to the high prominence of the guests attending the international price for visual arts awards. The organisers, who employed a British socialite agency responsible for inviting fashionable art personae from all over the globe (some of them taxied by a helicopter) to attend this exclusive and very prestigious event at which Calixto had the privilege to entertain the guests with a specially prepared abridged version of his performance, felt it would harm their image if such profundity as a topless female body (and alas presented as equal with males') would be shown to its social network. It is mind-boggling how such an innocent detail – for it has nothing to do with sexuality – can trigger sexual politics at a cultural level. The female body – objectified and silent – becomes the bone of contention to an economically driven pseudo-cultural image creating enterprise. Returning to *Paradise Lost*, it is generally taken to be case that Eve is weak and submissive, Adam strong and unyielding. Calixto presents both bodies topless (and equally marked with sin by means of a tattoo representing the tree) which renders them equal with no assigned gender to sex, and all its implications. Judith

Butler says that gender theories, and I would add gendered institutions (such as culture in the Netherlands) “still lack the critical resources for thinking radically about the historical sedimentation of sexuality and sex-related constructs if they do not delimit and describe the mundane manner in which these constructs are produced, reproduced, and maintained within the field of bodies” (Butler 525). Luckily, both Korzo Productions (Calixto's alma mater so to say) as well as the Gemeente Museum backed the choreographer's refusal to perform should any reductions relating to artistic content were to be imposed. The fact that Korzo decided to make this incident public during a performance after-talk with Calixto at a major dance festival is an affirmative institutional attempt at trying to “delimit and describe (…) these constructs” – though a drop in an ocean unfortunately.

The gendered roles of Adam and Eve as a prototype of humanity are somewhat fixed. The majority of people believe in this model and will derive all interpretation from its constructed gender social norm. But what if suddenly it is the woman who takes lead over the weak man? She already did by disobeying and eating that apple in her quest for acquiring knowledge. Knowledge is a tool of power, and patriarchy has naturally privileged men with the disposal of such tools. Yet, here in the beginning of humanity it is the woman who seeks knowledge and the passive man just wants to remain happy in his ignorance. It is his weakness of mind (or laziness) and cowardice to take the risk and face what may happen when one knows, and her bravery and unrelenting pursue of the knowledge – and it is not what gender-ignorant audience wants to see. By stripping his characters of gender specific portrayal Calixto challenges the traditional interpretation of *Paradise Lost* in which Adam and Eve respectively represent all the traditionally assumed masculine and feminine characteristics. Butler's point of view on gender as being performed through “stylization of the body” veraciously applies here:

> This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of a constituted social temporality (…) performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (519-520)

Regarding access to knowledge, we know there have been many interpretations of MPL but most of the people outside of academia are not aware of them. Many perhaps have construed this vision independently unaware of previous interpretations. And each one of their interpretations will always present different details based on the individual's own history. What Calixto does with his show is to remind us of that freedom of interpretation through shedding light at how knowledge changes everything. He creates a parallel between Eve's quest for knowledge “despite having way better things to do with her hot husband in a garden filled with sweet fruit) and the audience's (gender/scholarly) knowledge. He not only gives us a new interpretation, but he gives us the

playground for self-reflection and challenging our own stereotyping of gender roles and thus derived interpretation. This further brings out our ignorance of what has been thought of PL before thousand challenges our originality of interpretation – not degrading it though, just making the audience wonder, engage in complex self-reflection on many levels. We realise what we believe, what we have meticulously constructed and construed together with the rest of the society. Furthermore we believe in Calixto's performance – which is yet another parallel: the world on stage parallel our own world. What is real and what is construed? Is it only the interpretation of an art work? Or is it one's whole life background that supports this interpretation?

How real (i.e. genuine in existence versus fictional) a theatrical performance (of gender or anything else) is, or rather how real its effect on us, is also closely tied to Butler's gender performativity. She says we allow for a greater departure from the norm (each of us having set the standards somewhat diversely) on stage because a performance that is mediated (through theatre, dance, or any other form of art for that matter) appears less threatening than it would if it should happen in everyday life. There is a clear disparity in rules governing on-stage and real life performance, and how these affect the always real life (collective) viewer who in consequence is more or less prone to approve or disapprove the same gender act contingent on its apparent setting. An act in theatre – Butler brings up the example of a transvestite – can be easily "de-realised as *just* a play" in order to "maintain one's sense of reality in the face of temporary challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about gender arrangements". Whereas the same act in our daily life – on a bus or at work – is more likely to "compel fear, rage, even violence (...) precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act" and "its disquieting effect is that there are no conventions that facilitate making this separation" (527). However, if we agree that gender is constructed then there is no essential difference in its performance at different locations or in different circumstances – both the transvestite on stage and on a bus engage in the larger game of social expectations thus proving the absence of an inner true gender and instead legitimizing it as what it essentially is – a performance, in both cases equally real.

### 3.2: Masculinity

Raewyn Connell in her efforts to define masculinity compiled in her book *Masculinities*, says that twentieth century academia "failed to produce a coherent science of masculinity" due to the "impossibility of the task" (67). This is because masculinity is not an object with clearly definable characteristics, but rather a fluctuating notion prone to constant change in its characteristics, fickle like a feather in the wind. As we have also seen in Butler, it is an element to

consider within – and shaped by – a larger context of social structures, conventions and circumstances. The concept entails expectations regarding a persons' behaviour and character traits and is widely considered to be correlated with biological sex. The 'unmasculine' does not go well with males but will be rewarded in females, even though these boundaries vary between cultures: from driving a car to looking after offspring to political rights – such as education, or personal freedom such as interest in sex, or even travelling. Masculinity and femininity historically have been two sides of the same gender coin (which does not even exist because in the end it is just a show). The reason I chose to focus on this specific aspect is two-fold. Firstly, all characters in Calixto's *Paradise Lost* – including Eve – perform masculinity in a way that challenges historical conventions. And secondly, neither of them – and especially Eve – is punished for their departure from their gendered roles. By blending and fusing the binary opposite roles without blurring or flattening them, Calixto subtly yet strongly offers a new interpretation of a classic work that reminds us/the audience of our own presumptions.

As masculinity cannot be defined without femininity, it is worth having a look at how these two were shaped in recent cultural history. Men and women are different due to the obvious biological fact. In society however, this difference has been considered in terms of deficiency. Women have *less* strength, *less* reason, *less* body, power, ability, the list can go on. In short, they are lesser version of men in all aspects of life. This has undoubtedly given the superior version of a human great advantages but also, paradoxically, put him in the spot light of scrutiny. Women are allowed to fail due to their inferiority, men on the other hand pay greater price for not *performing* well. This binary basis for defining what is masculine has run through the recent philosophy (since feminists started talking about gender) and Connell smoothly (and not without humour) organises the most prevalent approaches in four groups: essentialist, positivist, normative, and semiotic (68-70).

The essentialists try to distil the essence of masculinity by picking up one or other aspect of the male life experience and building a whole theory around that. One of these “colourfully varied attempts” would include Lionel Tiger's infamous idea of “true maleness being elicited by 'hard and heavy phenomena'”, further supported – as Connell facetiously adds – by “heavy-metal rock fans”. This is problematic because the “choice of the essence is arbitrary” and rather than telling us anything about the object it more accurately represents attitudes of the proponent. (68)

The positivist approach tries to take facts to determine what men are. The most obvious biological fact is inevitably turned into “M/F psychological scales which are then validated by showing that they discriminate statistically between groups of men and women”. It is widely applied by ethnographers with the tendency to quickly brand any repeated male behaviour in any given culture as masculinity – “whatever it is”. Its weaknesses according to Connell are biased

standpoint of the analyst (for they already must have pre-defined male and female characteristics in order to pick up on them); grounding in binary typifaction (that is alleged to be under examination); and lack of consideration of the individual beyond the collective "bloc of men" or "bloc of women". (69)

"Normative definitions recognise these differences [between individuals] and offer a standard: masculinity is what men ought to be" and "allow that different men approach the standards to different degrees" (70). This eventually produces a paradox where very few men live up to the standards set, which in turn invalidates them (the standards that is) by rendering majority of objects (here I mean male roles rather than men themselves) unmasculine. Connell points out that this approach is often applied in media studies because it gives a ready model against which to analyse characters (mostly in film). This would indeed be a useful and straightforward method, possibly applicable in this thesis, had it not been void of consideration at its core for the personal relationship with one's gender and societal norms.

Finally, the semiotic way of looking at masculinity takes into consideration differences in meaning beyond personal experience and focuses more on the "places" that the masculine and feminine occupy. This contrasting is done, similarly as in language analysis, by means of comparing differences in elements present in each object. It recognises masculinity as the "unmarked term, the place of symbolic authority: the phallus is master-signifier and femininity is symbolically defined by a lack". Connell praises this approach as the least arbitrary and paradoxical of the four, but points out that in its postmodern nature it mostly deals with discourse and not the actual gendered places in "consumption, institutions, natural environments, social and military troubles". She calls for debates that include a wider scope of aspects defining masculinity and femininity beyond object – i.e. "natural character type, a behavioural average, a norm", and towards "processes and relationships" which shape gender roles. (71)

Connell proposes a "three-fold model of the structure of gender, distinguishing relations of (a) power, (b) production and (c) cathexis (emotional attachment)" and points out that "gender intersects with race, class and nationality" (74-75). The understanding that patriarchy has been the world's operating mode, despite some local variations and reversals, is nothing new. Feminist discourse has been challenging this order for decades with some success, and has managed to influence the relations of production to certain extent. Labour division and its economic worth have been socially constructed by men on the basis of reproductive facilities, in a way which validates and maintains their power and perpetuates women's disadvantageous position in social participation. Regarding emotional attachment, or sexual desire – as Connell seems to equal the two – it has often been excluded from the analysis of gender on the basis of being something natural, and often considered the core that true gender expresses (as we have seen in Butler). It is however, a

gendered practice designed – again – by the male order in which homosexuality or bisexuality are punished (i.e. exclusion from military service) and female consent taken for granted as a natural consequence of their biological reproductive facilities. Despite race, class and nationality evidently impacting on the shaping of gender roles, they will be of less interest in my analysis due to the fact that these factors are not explicitly challenged in Calixto's interpretation of *Paradise Lost,* and maintain Milton's perspective of an educated white male world order – the context in which both works, as well as this thesis, with their audience and authors, operate. Connell's model, conceived five years after Butler's *Gender Trouble*, does not perhaps sound very revolutionary considered from a perspective of time. It did however lay a strong foundation for a new, broader, more holistic, approach to gender analysis and to looking at masculinity specifically – that pillar of gender which for many decades, while feminists ranted about inequality, enjoyed almost exclusive immunity from any sort of investigation. At its core, it sees that "gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does not determine the social" (71) and it is this aspect that aligns with my analytical interests. I shall consider the aspects of gender shaping relations outlined here in my further analysis of *Paradise Lost.*

### 3.3: Gender in Dance and Theatre Studies

Male dancer – a **'**homo**'**, a **'**sissy**'**, a flaunting clown, and at very best an athletic *gentle* man in general assumption. Masculinity in dance has been a cause of buried unease in popular culture and a problematic issue among dance and gender scholars. The association of ballet dancers with homosexuality has not been so apparent until the late twentieth century feminist dance scholars and practitioners brought to light and questioned the inherently patriarchal organisation of ballet and classical theatre – both through academic discourse as well as through mainly post-modern choreographic practice (which as I mentioned before allowed for anyone to be a dancer and anything that they chose to call dance be dance) which saw a profusion of female choreographers and overtly gay male dancers in a plethora of *Untitled* pieces of questionable quality. In his *Remedial Approach to Reading Masculinity in Dance* (2004). Chris Roebuck says that this new approach paradoxically became the top of political correctness in modern dance, while the traditional approach which prescribed "acceptable (in ballet) masculine values such as gallantry, virility and rationality" was "placed on the bottom rung". I say paradoxically because regardless of the wider acceptance of varied masculinity norms in society, male dancers were (and still are) considered to "represent a corruption" of those traditional values, rather than progressive liberation from rigid codes, on the account of their engagement in what has been "historically associated with

the spectacular display of women's bodies" and "to be on display is associated with loss of power, which is regarded as a feminising position". (47-48)

In an attempt to move away from "politically essentialist strategies that stress the victimisation of women and stigmatise men" post-feminist scholars[11] have pointed out that only a handful of ballet works have been analysed and – validated through repeated analysis – considered as representative of an all-encompassing trend (Roebuck 48). To reflect why this is the case, we should look at the unwritten laws of which works make it into a cannon across all arts. Throughout centuries patriarchy quite successfully protected women from the destructive ideas art and literature might spawn in their feeble minds. All the way to the point that until recently we didn't even know there were many early-modern women writers because they were creating under a male pseudonym (a practice which unfortunately has persisted to this day: from Bronte Sisters to J.K. Rowling and R.W. Connell to mention but a few). So if the canonical works of ballet testify to the all-encompassing patriarchal standards precisely *because* they made it to the patriarchal canon on the account of representing patriarchal norms, then ballet is patriarchal. Therefore the postulates of post-feminism which propose that if we only looked at *all* the works the picture would have been different, is invalid because this already *is* the picture of ballet. Now, I am not saying that inclusion of 'other' – understood as female or gay – work into the canon is pointless or far-fetched. It will, hopefully, eventually, bring on the gender equality in art production, maybe. What I am trying to say is that this approach has very little potential when applied retrospectively in its attempts to re-shape dance history. And that is precisely because – let me stress that again – the big picture has already been painted by centuries of women's oppression and men's domination, has been validated by recognising their respective victimisation and stigmatisation, and unearthing works which cannot be unearthed (mostly due to the transient nature of dance, but also quite notably due to the lack of female scholars who might have taken up the task of archiving the few – if any (none come to my mind) – feminist ballet and theatrical works prior to the twentieth century). Thus let us not dwell too much in history for we may miss what is important now – that we can finally research, create and preserve challenging works for the sake of future generations, which can be achieved with yet another proposition made by the same post-feminist scholars Roebuck mentions – namely an "emphasis upon performance" (48).

This methodological aspect lies at the core of my thesis. It is that conjectural space in between the masculinist narrative and its actual performance that challenges stereotypical assumptions and sheds a new light on the story without having to alter it. This *is* the allure of adaptation, and in the case of ballet (contemporary as it might be) – the subtlety with which it can convey immense load of meaning. In her book *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*, Sally

11 Chris Roebuck points the reader to scholars such as Lynn Garafola, Sally Banes, Susan Manning, and Alexandra Carter.

Banes describes this process in detail, one which Roebuck applies not only to feminine representations but also to male dancers in the Euro-American dance canon. Banes analyses how gender roles are constructed in works created both by male and female choreographers, showing that these have a strong connection to the public and academic discourse which construct and at times aim to deconstruct these roles. In analysing the performance, rather than the plot, a dance scholar's work resembles more that of an ethnographer – who relies on contextual clues and empirical data collection, rather than, for example, a literary critic who has his object readily available for a thorough examination at all times expressed in a universally recognised code (text). One of the reasons that mostly male supremacist ballet works (some of them undeniably interesting, beautiful, moving, and inspiring) made it into the contemporary canon is, aside from the obvious male supremacy that supported their creation in a quagmire of its authority, the fact that due to the inherent ephemeral nature of dance even those feminist dance scholars who did question the status quo, worked mainly with the libretto for the practical reason of having something 'solid' to base their arguments on. Making any claims based solely on performance analysis is tricky precisely due to the lack of a uniform code (I will talk more about this in the analysis chapter of this thesis), the prime reason being ephemerality of movement, of which another aspect is that this inherent quality renders the object impossible to refer to in the future (unless we consider its mediated version) by peer scholars thus invalidating itself somewhat. Sally Banes insistently addresses these limitations in her book with a call for an ongoing thorough examination of dance works from numerous perspectives in order to create a coherent – i.e. one which considers gender structuring and performance – analysis not only of specific works but of performance studies in general.

Because dance is a live art, relying on the libretto in its description creates similar problem – that it leaves out that whole load of meaning that a human body can carry. Banes attests that: “looking at the plot in relation to performance has enormous consequences for interpretation”. This is because what the text may describe as something weak for example, can be given a lot of power on stage and likewise, a robust and mighty character in a compelling role which bolsters chauvinistic order may be performed in a thousand ways contrary to that. This is particularly noticeable in the case of *Paradise Lost* – where majority of the audience will tend towards text-based interpretation that follows the Miltonian patriarchal values (although quite liberal for his times) even though, on a closer performance-based examination this proves not to be the case. Banes claims that at times “the plot and the performance can come into direct conflict” on stage creating irony or “undermining the narrative flow”. After expulsion from Paradise, in Calixto's *Paradise Lost,* Eve is the one that *leads* towards the new unknown world, almost as if she did not care about God's orders of expulsion – she wants to go there, it is beautiful and luminescent and God does not really have a say here any more. It is her will to go, and Adam follows. The plot

remains the same, the agency is shifted. (10)

# Chapter Four: Analysis of masculinity/femininity in Milton's poem

In this chapter I shall examine Milton's portrayal of gender roles as expressed in Eve's and Adam's representations in *Paradise Lost.* Several interpretive strategies will be considered, from gender-based to contextual, together with reflection on whether these can be considered Milton's point view about ideal gender order, or perhaps his critique of it, since it is partially expressed through the character of Satan. A closer analysis of each character will follow, with some insight into their relationships.

## 4.1: Gender in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

Adam and Eve are described in Satan's overview of the garden as superior creatures, though not quite equal to one another:

> Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
> Godlike erect, with native honour clad
> In naked majesty seemed lords of all:
> And worthy seemed; for in their looks divine
> The image of their glorious Maker shone,
> Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,
> (Severe, but in true filial freedom placed,)
> Whence true authority in men; **though both**
> **Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;**
> **For contemplation he and velour formed;**
> **For softness she and sweet attractive grace;**
> **He for God only, she for God in him:**
> His fair large front and eye sublime declared
> Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
> Round from his parted forelock manly hung
> Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad:
> She, as a veil, down to the slender waist
> Her unadorned golden tresses wore
> Disheveled, but in wanton ringlets waved

As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection, but required with gentle sway,
And by her yielded, by him best received,
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay. (IV.286-309)

Satan is making assumptions about intellectual qualities of the two based on their physical looks. The "not equal" judgement takes Adam's "contemplation" and Eve's "attractive(ness)" into comparison – a logical error of category, which reduces Eve to a non-thinking object happily "subjected" to Adam and at his disposal. Adam's "fair large front", "hyacinthine locks (…) manly hung", and "shoulders broad" are – in the eyes of Satan – indicative of his intellectual superiority over Eve. On the other hand, her physicality: "slender waist" and "wanton ringlets" are telling of her "subjection (…) yielded with coy submission". There is not a mention of any capability for intellectual agency in Eve, her sole purpose of existence is to be a nice and pretty companion of Adam, who is brave and intelligent – an image of God, and God to her. Presumably Milton and the majority of his male contemporaries (if not ours) would have enjoyed such an arrangement. Which is fine, provided all women were solely interested in being pretty and sweet for their husbands – which as we know was not the case neither in Milton's time, nor nowadays. To declare Milton an utter misogynist however, would be somewhat hasty. First of all, it is not the poem's narrator speaking but Satan. In *Gender, Sex, and Marriage in Paradise*, Karen L. Edwards makes a point that the first presentation of Adam and Eve as unequal "occurs within Satan's first survey of the Garden of Eden (4.205–357)" and as such challenges the reader to "ask from whose perspective it is that "thir sex not equal seemd." (144). Being an already fallen creature, his judgement – as we can see in plenty of other instances in the poem – is based on vile standards and biased towards a version of events that suits his own interest, and by no means objective. Secondly, she points out that things *seem* to him, rather than *are.* This subtle difference in describing factuality of things, be it in the speech of Satan or any other character – but in Satan's case most prominent, creates a space for interpretation in which every reader will bring in his or her life knowledge and experiences to (un)consciously decide what is, or seems to be, real (in the poem at least).

It might be helpful to look at some other prose writings of Milton through which he is known to have tried to reform the society. One of them is a highly entraining and moralizing masque *Comus* (1634) in which the Lady exemplifies the highest virtues of chastity and self-control while tempted with bodily pleasures by the intemperate Comus while in his captivity. From several other texts, but most notably from his *Tetrachordon* (1645) we find out that Milton held women in hight regard and had high standards considering their part in a marriage (which was much greater than an unconditional submission). The treatise aims specifically at the extremely rigid marriage

laws, which did not allow divorce except for adultery, and which greatly hurt both men and women who were trapped in loveless, economically driven and sexually unfulfilling relationships. In her recent study *Whose Liberty? The Rhetoric of Milton's Divorce Tracts* Diane Purkiss says that "Milton sought to reverse the priorities of current divorce law by privileging the mind over the body, companionship over sexual matters" (1). And even though the Bible explicitly says that divorce is forbidden, Milton tends to build up his argument on passages that prescribe other than reproductive aspects of marriage such as woman's support of her husband, and considers, for example, "the apt and cheerful conversation of man with woman, to comfort and refresh him against the evils of solitary life" as one of the most fundamental tasks of a wife (qtd. in Purkiss 2). The fact that a woman's role is still secondary in relation to a man reflects not so much Milton's chauvinist attitudes, as it is a reflection of his moderate attempts to progress these norms giving more liberty – and thus equality – to both sexes. What can be considered at best a moderate attempt nowadays was met with outrage by Milton's contemporaries. For the above reasons (Satan and *Tetrachordon*) and the additional fact that feminism did not exist in his times, to declare Milton misogynist would be as valid as lamenting his lack of computer skills, for instance.

The fact that Milton saw a woman as a man's companion rather than a servant, bound by love rather than formal obligation, is abundantly expressed in *Paradise Lost* in several assurances that Adam makes about his love towards Eve. Awkward and naive as they may sometimes come across, these proclamations testify to Milton's ideal of marriage: her for him but only with *mutual* love and respect. Adam's affection for his wife is expressed throughout the book in various descriptions of their interactions, in which even though he commands her and she gladly follows, these instances are always performed with respect and gentility of speech. His greatest prove of love is perhaps the moment when he decides to join Eve in disobeying God and reaching for the tree of knowledge because he cannot imagine being without her, even – or especially – in the misery of God's punishment. Adam also continuously affirms his love to Eve both in a direct address, as well as in front of his superior Raphael when he admits his weakness for her beauty:

> Yet when I approach
> Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
> And in herself complete, so well to know
> Her own, that what she wills to do or say,
> Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best:
> All higher knowledge in her presence falls
> Degraded; Wisdom in discourse with her
> Loses discountenanced, and like Folly shows;
> **Authority and Reason on her wait**,

As one intended first, not after made

Occasionally; (VIII, 546-56)

This passage hints at Milton's recognition of women's reasoning qualities which give them authority where men fail. It is Adam's love for Eve that ultimately led to his fall. Had he been a ruthless husband he would have neither allowed her to wander off alone, and surely upon realising she did – punish her duly. In his failure as a perfect husband he empowered Eve to take over the course of action despite her lower rank and lesser knowledge of the world. Ironically, this failure-induced empowerment gave Eve the possibility to save Adam from despair with her love, but also reason and practicality, after the fall. This is the foreshadowing that Calixto takes up in his interpretation where Eve is the ultimate writer of the story in which regardless of the circumstances (pre and post lapse) or others (men) thinking they write her story (God, Adam, Milton) she has the agency to do whatever she pleases, though it is concealed under the veil of submission in matters which do not really matter such as preparing a meal for Raphael.

Despite the obvious inequality between Adam and Eve pictured by Milton, he considered specific feminine qualities as desirable for the woman to become a man's companion near-equal to him. Karen L. Edwards claims that “Milton believed Adam’s virtues are those fostering independent individuality and philosophical speculation; Eve’s are virtues enabling human relations, those that nourish communion and communication” (149). Milton's general high standard for his audience[12] applied, to a certain extent, to women too – they could near them with their husbands help. If women were to be able to intelligently converse, entertain and support their husbands, they had to be educated how to do it. Rather than being sent off to supervise kitchen staff or look after kids, they should accompany their husbands in the study of rhetoric, philosophy and languages – that is of course if marriage institution reflected the ideal Miltonian model rather than a senseless arrangement of no good to nobody. Edwards quotes a mid-twentieth century American scholar of Puritanism in pre-modern England William Haller (whose original work I was not able to obtain[13]) explaining that Milton “typical of Protestant theologians and ministers of his day” had no more need for telling his readers that “men were superior to women [ . . . ] than for insisting how nearly women might be expected through love and marriage to approach their husbands’ level” (qtd. in Edwards 149). This befittingly reflects the malady of both sexes who cannot realise their joint potential due to the patriarchal (though not fully realised as such by Milton) restrictions on women's access to education. Which again brings us to the power control of resources that have the potential to challenge the long-established power relations. Milton, by granting women a little bit of access to education – so they can be more pleasant to men – did not perhaps realise the potential danger this

12 He prescribes in detail the desired education and life style to make up for the original sin in his 1644 essay *Of Education.*

13 Haller, William (1946). “Hail Wedded Love.” *English Literary History* 13: 79–97. (p.84)

would create to patriarchy (something that his opponents clearly did realise) eventually leading to a disastrous emancipation of women a few hundred years later. Milton clearly saw the connection between knowledge and power: Eve after receiving knowledge wonders if she should share it with her partner "to partake full happiness" together, or whether to "keep the odds of knowledge in my power" (IX, 818-20). She reasonably weighs her options with advantages and disadvantages:

> the more to draw his love,
> And render me more equal; and perhaps,
> A thing not undesirable, sometime
> Superior – for, inferior, who is free? (IX, 822-25)

Her ruminations on freedom and superiority (masculine traits) are gradually overtaken by a hint of jealousy (traditionally associated with feminine characteristics) when she realises that God may dispose of her and get Adam a new wife:

> This may be well: But what if God have seen,
> And death ensue? then I shall be no more,
> And Adam, wedded to another Eve,
> Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
> A death to think! (IX, 826-30)

Eve eventually yields to her feminine reasoning and compelled by deep love to Adam decides to subject him to whatever ordeal God may choose as their punishment only not to lose him:

> Confirmed then I resolve,
> Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe:
> So dear I love him, that with him all deaths
> I could endure, without him live no life. (IX, 830-33)

It is she who is the ultimate decision maker. It can be argued, at two extremes, that on one hand Milton nearly mocks female reasoning, and on the other – due to the fact that Adam eventually acquiesces with Eve in his reasoning *and* for love – that it is male reasoning that is faulty and the foundation of all trouble. Edwards, basing her argument on Milton's *Tetrachordon*[14], claims that Milton "adds a different kind of qualification: sometimes a woman may 'exceed her husband in prudence and dexterity,' in which case he should 'contentedly yeeld,' for 'the wiser should govern the lesse wise, whether male or female'. Wisdom, that is, outranks masculinity" (Edwards 146). Was Eve wiser than Adam in her quest for knowledge – despite the punishment they both received? Even though it may not have been Milton's intention to portray the woman as the wiser one, he undeniably did so even if unaware. Here I must refute a possible objection towards this proposition – that Milton clearly knew what his intentions were. He certainly did. What he did not, and could

14 Milton, John (1953–82). *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*. Edited by Don M. Wolfe. 8 vols. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. (vol 2, p.589)

have not anticipated, was foreseeing the future development of twentieth century philosophical thought and gender studies that would shed completely different light on his epic work. Similarly to spherical Earth being merely a speculation in pre-Hellenistic astronomy, or – to give a more contemporary example – us not knowing what is dark matter, or whether life exists elsewhere.

## 4.2: The characters

At close examination of the poem, we find two interesting facts: one, that Milton differentiates between gender and sex, and two – that only Adam and Eve (and the animals) are assigned sexes. Let us probe the latter first. We learn from Book I that:

> For spirits when they please
> Can either sex assume, or both; (I, 423-4)

Although it is not clear whether God and his son are considered as spirits – though they have been described as spiritual beings beyond comprehension, we can be certain that all angels fall into this category, including Satan. Kent Lehnhof in his essay *Performing Masculinity in Paradise Lost* takes his claim as far as to proclaim that "Adam is the epic's only male" (64). This is quite controversial, especially when we look at the portrait of God. Even though many sources, including the Bible, tell us that God is beyond and above everything and cannot be imagined, *he* always manages to present himself shape-shifted into a male avatar. This representational bias, so deeply ingrained in collective consciousness, has perhaps as its reason the fact that the Bible was written by men, and its visual illustrations throughout history – coincidently also painted by men – have supported that notion. Also, by employing basic logic we see that God most likely is male for it was the male Adam – not Eve – who was created to resemble God, her being just a spin-off to provide a mate. And since the only difference between Adam and Eve is their biological sex, then God, and presumably his son (having a son means having reproductive qualities, even if only symbolically) are male (even if only – again – symbolically). The angels seem to be another breed so I would not assume the "Sprits" applies both to angels and god collectively. It is interesting to note that the angels choose to only assume male sex to fulfil "thir aerie purposes" (I, 430), while Satan – very manly male all round – changes into a lion, tiger, cherub, toad, or serpent whenever it suits him to his purpose, as if not worried about having to live up to the manly standards. Lehnhof says that "Milton's angels possess gender only to the extent that they perform it" (65), and they do it very convincingly both for the reader and for Adam, who after the fall laments:

> Oh, why did God,
> Creator wise, that peopled highest Heaven

With Spirits masculine, create at last
This novelty on earth, this fair defect
Of nature, and not fill the world at once
With men, as angels, without feminine; (X.869-874)

Clearly, in the eyes of Adam – and because he is the protagonist we believe him – the angels are male, and maleness is the core of virtue and perfection. However, his blaming that which is feminine in the universe as the cause of *his* fall also testifies to his recognition of the feminine agency which he failed to control, or at the very least resist. We see Adam inadvertently admitting his effeminacy, which is also indicated at several moments throughout the poem (see the following paragraph). Alternatively, we can assume that Adam's train of though is faulty after the fall (remember the "sex not equal" which only Satan could conceive of), which in effect ridicules both the superiority of maleness as well as defectiveness of the feminine.

4.2.1: Adam

Despite being the only biological male – and a very perfect one – his masculinity is constantly challenged by the heavenly authorities. At three different occasions, three seemingly male superior figures: Raphael, Michael, and the Son, remind Adam that he does not really live up to the expectations of a real man. After recounting in over hundred lines to Raphael in Book VIII how he met his wife and how incredibly gorgeous she is, the angel eventually tells Adam to cool off and use his brains rather than allow himself to be swept with desire:

And be not diffident
Of Wisdom; she deserts thee not, if thou
Dismiss not her, when most thou needest her nigh,
By attributing overmuch to things
Less excellent, as thou thyself perceivest. (VIII, 562-66)

And:

But if the sense of touch, whereby mankind
Is propagated, seem such dear delight
Beyond all other; think the same vouchsafed
To cattle and each beast; (XIII, 579-82)

Despite Raphael's warning, Adam allows himself to be charmed by his wife into splitting labour (another interesting thread that I will not pursue further here but merely point out that Milton suggests that listening to one's wife how a job should be done is not a good idea – at least when the

future of humanity is at stake) which leads to their separation. With some reluctance, he bestows an amount of trust on her that creates a situation in which Adam cannot fully control his wife any more. His decision however, was not solely based on her charm as the angels would like us to think, but also on her credible reasoning. Eventually the blame is on him (remember men are less allowed to fail than the weaker sex) as we learn from the Son's reprimand:

> Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey
> Before his voice? or was she made thy guide,
> Superior, or but equal, that to her
> Thou didst **resign thy manhood**, and the place
> Wherein God set thee above her made of thee,
> And for thee, whose perfection far excelled
> Hers in all real dignity? Adorned
> She was indeed, and lovely, to attract
> Thy love, not **thy subjection**; (X.145-153)

These must have been painful words to hear for Adam – all about resigning his manhood and subjecting himself to an inferior creature, especially coming straight from the chief executive. A word of caution to all the early modern real men to keep their wives in check lest they want to be considered a sissy. Eventually, after Adam slightly recovers from the shock of punishment, he tries to clear his conscience by transposing the guilt on to Eve:

> But still I see the tenor of Man's woe
> Holds on the same, from Woman to begin. (XI, 632-33)

– once again Michael makes sure Adam knows his masculinity was not (performed) sufficient(ly) enough and he has no one else to blame but himself. Thus, once again, stripping him off whatever remains of masculinity he (poor Adam) possessed with a swift rebuke (as if he really had enough, we all surely do):

> From Man's effeminate slackness it begins,
> Said the angel, who should better hold his place
> By wisdom, and superior gifts received. (XI, 634-36)

This continuous gender bashing seems to be reserved for Adam only. Eve is spared reminders of how inferior she is – for she just is, or even more so – that she has lost her femininity due to her insubordination and un-ladylike plotting to achieve knowledge and freedom. Furthermore, Lehnhof succinctly points out that “although charges of effeminacy are pervasive in Milton's works, serving as the standard label for those stuck in sin and error, Satan is never accused of being effeminate” (67). What is it that Milton is trying to tell us? Is Satan, after all, an unrealised epitome of masculine virtue, corrupted *only* through disobedience to god (this reflecting Milton's political views)? Or is

he, not Adam, a symbol of an (early) modern not fully reformed everyman? Calixto takes up this question in his performance, but before we look at the analysis, let us see what is written about Satan in the poem.

### 4.2.2: Satan

Satan is a complex character who has been praised for being the greatest orator in English literature, and at the same time a personification of evil and – due to his ingenious rhetoric which make us sympathise with him – an angel apparently wronged by a despotic God. His perverse masculinity oftentimes manifested in masochistic pride, eventually leads him to achieve his goal of condemning mankind. Satan does not forget who he is and what is his job, not even in the face of desire. He clearly engages in a seduction game with Eve, even though his intentions may not seem erotic but political. And when we find out about his affair with Sin, we learn that he is attracted to her mainly because she resembles him – in the words of Sin:

> I pleased, and with attractive graces won
> The most averse, thee chiefly, who, full oft
> Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing. (II, 762-4)

Satan's narcissism can be paralleled with that of Eve's who is enchanted by her own reflection in the water, which may serve as a foreshadowing of her masculine qualities but interestingly not as something that would retrospectively de-masculinise Satan. Lehnhof contends that:

> by stipulating that Satan's desire is narcissistic instead of uxorious, *Paradise Lost* places the adversary outside of the effeminating scenario played out in paradise. In so doing, the poem distinguishes between Adam's fall, which is repeatedly associated with a loss of masculinity, and Satan's fall, which is not. (68)

It is becoming more apparent that masculinity, even though it is usually attached to the male sex, is not its defining quality. It is difficult to speculate Milton's views on sex and gender – distinction between which was not really of much concern in his time, and even more so a discourse of the latter's performativity. However, these few observations pointed out so far do attest to the fact that gender roles in *Paradise Lost* are not so straightforward: on one hand masculinity is a virtue exercised heavily by the angels (who are sexless), on the other the main antagonist also displays unquestionable manliness – being an angel himself after all. Is, then, masculinity the ultimate virtue? Is it an ideal towards which men (and women) should aspire? How manly is Eve, does she loose her femininity by acquiring knowledge and relative freedom?

4.2.3: Eve

When Eve wakes up for the first time she immediately falls in love – with her surroundings, that beautiful creature in the lake which at first she does not recognise as herself, and eventually with Adam. Her love at first sight with everything and everyone reflects her childlike naivety. It is dangerous and God very quickly leads her towards her protector. She wants to have one more look but Adam grabs her hand. Their first encounter sets up the tone for their relationship: she is incapable and in need of guidance and protection from herself, and he is the almost divine protector and owner of her whims. Whereas Adam's awakening reflects his philosophical nature as he ponders about the world, Eve's reflects her fascination with beauty and superficiality as well as that childlike ignorance. Nevertheless, she seems to be quite happy in her lowly and taken-care-of subordinate position:

> Oh thou for whom
> And from whom I was formed, flesh of thy flesh,
> And without whom am to no end, my guide
> And head, what thou hast said is just and right. (IV, 438-441)

However, if we consider the instances in which she eventually had the upper hand over Adam – such as convincing him to separate, or to try the forbidden fruit, as well as the moments when she chose to obey without hesitation (but only when it really did not matter), together with her inquisitiveness of the encounter with the serpent, we realise that her seemingly flighty charm was only a means to an end. She knew precisely what role she was assigned by the writers of the universe, and she wittingly outsmarted all of them by playing by their own rules. Milton, by bestowing some masculine qualities upon the very feminine Eve, and *without* taking away any of her grace, separates, or acknowledges a distinction between, sex and gender showing us that these not always align with their biological marker. Lehnhof brings up another example justifying this supposition – that of the sexless angels assuming masculine avatars: “to recognise that this remarkable manhood (Raphael) has no anatomical warrant is to begin to appreciate the extent to which Milton's poem unstitches the traditional ties between maleness and masculinity” (68)

We begin to realise that gender roles in *Paradise Lost* are not rigidly constructed upon their corresponding biological sex. There is a vast array of genders, sexes, and sexualities happening, and they are not constructed as stand-alone but against and in relation to one another. We wouldn't consider Adam unmasculine if there wasn't a ready model of perfect masculinity. This model however, isn't even male. That combined with the fact that Eve acquires certain masculine qualities over the course of the story (which also testifies to her capability to learn – yet another masculine

trait) opens a gate to countless interpretations regarding the characters' motives and true meaning of their words and actions (if there can be such – remember audience engagement from Chapter One).

In her chapter of the *Milton and Gender* book, titled *Gender of Civic Virtue*, Gina Hausknecht takes this notion slightly further and claims that for Milton masculinity is a way of social conduct that reflects specific values usually assigned to virtuous men, but does not necessarily have to be matched with a person's morphology:

> This explicitly masculine heroism is, in Milton's terms, about courageous self-management and articulation, about the mind, and very specifically not about the body. Manliness represents for Milton the ability to discern correctly where one stands, when to submit and when to refuse, when and how to give consent. (19)

Eve's behaviour is almost entirely consistent with these expectations: she realises she is not free because she lacks knowledge, then takes the initiative to sort this problem out for herself. She often submits, but more in speech than in action, because she is aware of the hierarchy and futility of speaking up against those in power. She refuses to take the entire blame for the fall, recognising that after all, Adam initially failed in his only task – that is being a true, undeniable, absolute incarnation of masculinity. In other words, "man can be insufficiently masculine, and women are not unequivocally subordinate. The space opened up for gender does not preclude assumptions based on sex but it does indicate that those assumptions are not totalizing. It allows for a rational Eve in *Paradise Lost*" (Hausknecht 32). Based on these theories, and Calixto's interpretation which follows, I propose that the character of Eve is a candidate who seamlessly fulfils – with her apparent flaws – the ethos of masculinity, both in Miltonian terms, as well as along with the previously described more recent to contemporary views on gender roles and performativity.

# Chapter Five: Dance analysis

## 5.1: Note on dance analysis

The everlasting dilemma for a dance analyst is how to put in words phenomena such as light, space, sound, and how all these are negotiated by the presence of a human body in motion, presenting what happens in a performance in a way that people can imagine it. How to name the millions of possible movements with their shapes, timing and dynamics in words that could actually express their meaning? It seems easier to just dance! After all if we could, we would write a book and not make a dance. There have been numerous attempts to create a coherent dance notation system throughout history. Some of them were created specific dances, other to capture a wider range of mostly Western dances. They are all rather cumbersome and none of them is capable to transpose neither all the formal features of a dance, nor their assigned meaning. Here again we are faced with the limitations of a specific medium in an attempt to translate art: it is inevitable that certain elements will be left to interpretation. A dance score – sort of a written account of the work made by the choreographer – is perhaps the most accurate representation of a dance piece, except that it only works well for the one person who created it. Nevertheless, it can be useful in dance analysis, and spectatorship, to get hold of a dance score and have it readily available to serve us as a form of subtitles. Jonathan Burrows says that a score “freezes time in a concrete form, allowing you to glimpse what can be hard to grasp perceptually in real-time experience” (142). Samir Calixto explained his score in a personal interview with me, more of which follows in the next section.

Another way to analyse dance would be to describe the effect it has on the receiver. The limitation again is that every critic can only describe those effects with certainty (and not even that at all times) in relation to oneself. Probably with years of experience in dance writing, watching shows, interviewing audiences and dance makers, and comparing one's own written account of the same piece with that of others, would yield quite an objective review. And this is only as far as we can go in the best of dance analysis. We must never forget that every secondary account of a piece of art (or of anything for that matter) is just that – secondary, always negotiated through a prism of personal experience. Therefore**,** I attach a recording of Calixto's *Paradise Lost* and urge the reader to invest time in watching it, even if it is just not to waste the time invested here so far. I would also like to remind the reader that the attached DVD is not *Paradise Lost*, but a mere registration of the performance, mediated through the camera and as such a film at best, extracted from its righteous dwelling in a theatre setting.

In my analysis, I shall try to combine all three approaches to a varying extent. I shall not go too much into technical details but describe those dance elements which relate to the subject of this thesis – for this dance, where performance of gender roles is one of many semantic devices, was not created with the sole intention to subvert traditional gender roles in *Paradise Lost* but to "address the extent to which humanist tradition and long-established social constructs, of which religion is a big part, still influence our perception of good and evil, and shape who we are" (Calixto). I shall then proceed to ruminate over them in the lines of hitherto outlined theory. Having an insight into a kind of ephemeral spoken score during an interview with the maker, will aid me in my ruminations/analysis. Calixto explained that the work is more of a philosophical nature, with a simple dramaturgical line as a background that is rid of a waffling plot and allows for deep emotional engagement. The mental and emotional states that the dancers visibly reach during the show have been achieved through subjecting their bodies to extreme exercises during the creative process[15], and it is this investment that we see on the stage, rather than a simple re-telling of a story.

### 5.1.1: Terminology

Before moving on to an analysis of Samir Calixto's *Paradise Lost* it is necessary to introduce a brief overview of formal components of dance and dance analysis with a short explanation as to what these terms imply. The following is loosely based on a quite extensive online resource ArtsAlive[16], aided with personal notes collected during lectures in dance studies, as well as drawing on my own knowledge arrived at in the course of work in dance production. Should the reader be interested in pursuing the study of dance composition further than this chapter I refer them to Jacqueline M. Smith-Autard's *Dance Composition* book with DVD, a staple in primary academic dance education.

Dance composition can be roughly divided over four elements: shapes, space, timing, and dynamics. All these areas consist of several aspects that are usually given prevailing attention in both the creating process and analysis or (not so often educated) critique:

- Shapes can be expressed in lines (long, straight, curved, jagged), angular contours, side bends, and various positions of body parts. They are connected by movements which are performed at levels (high, middle, low, vertical, horizontal, oblique). Together they form

15 Movement research was central to Calixto in the creative stage. Together with the dancers the group continuously attempted to reach that critical point after which the body is rid of the mind and exposed in its pure aptitude in order to challenge the performers to attain states which relate to the trials exposed in the book. Some ways to achieve those states would be to: in the rehearsal studio, blindfolded imagine you are alone in the universe with not a sound for three hours; or blindfolded explore the concept of lust while unexpectedly being subjected to a piercing sound. (Interview courtesy: Samir Calixto)

16 http://www.artsalive.ca/en/dan/make/toolbox/elements.asp

movement phrases which can be described as (a)symmetric or (un)balanced, and can be performed at a spectrum of small to large scale.

- Space refers to a spatial design and can be defined by paths and patterns in performance areas, as well the architecture of dynamic structures with bodies. Horizontal patterns will include geometrical shapes or free flow on the floor; vertical space encompasses lifts, jumps as well as elevated platforms or scaffolds. It can be described in terms of expansive or constricted scale, and with a degree of symmetry.
- Timing is defined by tempo, metre and rhythm. Tempo, or speed, can range between slow and fast, or alternating, and might have a steady or changeable quality (i.e. speeding up or slowing down). Movement may or may not count in musical beats depending on the intended effect (i.e. accentuation or juxtaposition), and can change metres or be polyrhythmic (having two or more simultaneous tempos and/or metres). Rhythm is the pattern of the phrase and can be either regular or syncopated (shifting). When dance is performed in silence or to a soundscape, its movements embody their own rhythm.
- Dynamics, energy, or effort, encompasses all other elements. It is an intangible factor which adds to the uniqueness of the dance. It can be described in terms of weight (strong or light), time (sustained or sudden), space (direct or indirect), and flow (bound, free, or fluctuating). <http://www.artsalive.ca/en/dan/make/toolbox/elements.asp>

## 5.2: Samir Calixto's *Paradise Lost*

The performance starts with a sharp bright spot light at the back-centre stage directed at the audience. Below, we notice a silhouette, barely visible, engulfed in darkness. As the light grows stronger it casts rays through what seems to be feathers. The silhouette rises slowly and spreads its wings in a majestic swing. Suddenly the light is gone and we are left in complete darkness with the otherworldly creature. The subsequent scene, set in the same manner, is very short but we notice that the creature has lost its wings. Light, or lack thereof, plays a central role in *Paradise Lost.* It is considered as another actor, rather than a mere part of a stage design. The sharp piercing spot light is God, and when it is present on stage – when it is speaking so to say – things happen under its beam, barely lit, signifying its importance. This dual opening scene sets the mood for the entire performance, where the subtlest light fluctuations carry significance. At first the yet not fallen angel faces God in heaven, still – for he is thus far a winged creature. Soon after he is thrown into hell and stripped of his most defining angelic feature. The difference between heaven and hell is none: both places are dreadful, only illuminated with a faint shade of a despotic God, powerful but

concentrated within himself.

The performance consists of three chapters. In the first one – Disobedience – we meet Satan, performed by Calixto himself. Initially we can only notice the figure's contour, slowly unfurling. He is curling and stretching his back in a rhythmical sensual movement. In a highly controlled bound flow the dancer is fixed in one place, his movements performed with careful precision. It is very dark. The music is slow and quiet, but sharp which creates a feeling of suspense. Staggering he stretches, opens up his arms to make himself bigger, and slowly comes towards us, then back and forth in symmetric side bends. He moves back in the direction of the spot light, his palms in a gesture resembling a crown. The shadow cast resembles small wings, which brings back to mind his foregone divinity (or rather his lost angelhood). Even though he performs in a sustained manner, as if he had all the time in the world, there is a sense of urgency, perhaps expressed in occasional, very minute, fluctuations in tempo. We watch Satan in all his might, we get to know him, we learn from him. His movement vocabulary seems to alternate between two languages: expansive round rhythmical low horizontal shapes – luxuriating and sensual, and the other with quick sharp rigid constricted vertical lines up – irregular and short. The two extremes are meant to represent duality and oppositions – the main theme and method of the performance. The two alternating movement languages are also implicative of the two genders. Calixto explains that “Satan is genderless and of both genders at the same time, he carries within him all that is human, all extremes, with which he later 'contaminates' Adam and Eve. It is this contamination that makes them human”. In other words, Satan is not without gender but without one specific gender. Suddenly he throws himself with violence to the floor at our feet (well, that of the front-row audience at least – where I usually sit, and where the camera is). Then he crawls away like a cripple, as if into hiding. The music becomes louder and strikes a more piercing tone. The raging angel seems to swear a revenge in his furious address towards God. With a split second of flash light he then promptly falls to the floor. God has replied with condemnation, his presence brief but forceful. In total darkness, the music rises in pitch and loudness foreshadowing the true pandemonium that is about to unfold.

Satan runs frantically from side to side in front of God, shouting indistinctly. There is another split-second light flash, a sudden lightning. God's response, though sharp and powerful, is disproportionally minimal in relation to all the effort that is being exerted in front of him. Satan draws near us in a series of convoluted crippled skips now synchronised with the oscillating musical score. His jumps become stronger and he repeatedly falls – as if his attempts at the rebellion or revenge at God were doomed to failure. He keeps crawling on his knees with contorted skipping, seems to be burning and screams as if about to explode, then falls exhausted. This first part sets the tone for the rest of the show with paradise being not much brighter or calmer. In fact, Calixto admits it was his aim “to make the paradise as dark and violent as possible, because it is only *after* we

leave the state of ignorance, reflected in religious dogma, that light can come".

Before his departure, the fallen angel regards a man and a woman in the distance. They are Adam and Eve, oblivious to the devil's gaze. The spotlight is gone, light dispersed over the two. It is somewhat brighter and somewhat warmer, but maybe only by just one shade. Adam and Eve slowly get to know each other but, in their dance, they never touch, even though to an untrained eye it may look as though they do. This is important to note, because later the significance of touch becomes evident. They are both equally half-naked, which signifies both their innocence, as well as their equality. It gets dark, with eerie music, and while Satan is plotting, Adam and Eve reflect each other's steps in unison until eventually she performs behind him in synchrony: he is the protector and is becoming her superior. The dance progresses towards a feeling of distress. Satan is already 'contaminating' – for, as we have seen, only he could conceive of the "sexes as not equal" – although the naive humans do not realise it yet. Satan leaves and the couple separates.

Part two – the chapter of the Paradise, which depicts doubt and temptation – explores separation and the fight against oppositions where the characters are struggling to respond to multiple impulses pulling them in various directions. It opens with Adam and Eve discovering themselves, each other, their surroundings. It still looks pretty grim, with ghastly aura of the dismal dark austere space, sombre music, surly lights, and dire mood. Although now that Satan is gone it is a bit brighter. The couple's relationship is reflected in their synchronised dance, Eve still half a step behind Adam. The inequality creeps in and will later be the foundation on which Satan is able to carry out his plan. Samir Calixto placed Eve deliberately behind Adam in order to "illustrate the male conception of superiority so present in the book". He further explains that "while this reaffirms the misogyny, it also facilitates Eve's 'escapade'. Being behind him gives her the opportunity to look and do things without being guarded by the male eye". The performance continues in a peaceful manner, with calm music and the light evenly dispersed over the space occupied by the dancers. Nevertheless, darkness continues to form the backdrop, reminding us this peaceful innocent state is very feeble and can be easily forlorn. At this point we notice their bodies carry tattoos of a tree – the tree of knowledge: the full plant on Adam's back, and a branch on Eve's stomach. The significance is threefold: for one they are already imprinted with sin, or the sin of knowledge; two they carry the seed within them – the seed of being human with all the flaws and imperfections; and three the uneven distribution of the amount of sin, knowledge, humanity reflected in their varying tattoo design is evident of their slowly developing hierarchical relationship (infested by Satan, and a basis for all trouble). The choreographer explains that "Eve carries the seed of voluptuousness and Adam the seed of anger". After the fall, we see those potentialities realised.

Eve dances alone, focused on herself. Adam watches her, then goes to get her. Again, they dance in unison. But she gets carried away to the wings as if reaching towards something. And again, he goes to get her back and once more they dance in unison, but then suddenly, as the dancers are turned to us with their backs, Adam at once turns his head and looks at the audience. He stares out at us. He can sense something – perhaps a devil... In the distance at the back of the stage Satan watches from behind a glossy curtain – a thin boundary between hell and paradise. Or is it Adam's reflection that looks like Satan? It happens so fast we are not sure. Adam seems concerned, alert, and just like us at this point – not sure what is really happening. He appears to be busy with himself and slowly losing his wits, while she wanders away towards Satan who is lurking from behind the glossy curtain. The lustrous effect of the curtain makes Satan, as well Eve's own shiny reflection, very appealing and mysterious at the same time – an allusion regarding her being in love with her own reflection upon wakening. She is being tempted to move as far from Adam as physically on stage possible (diagonally opposite); then he suddenly finds her and Satan disappears. In the following sequence, they perform similar movement phrase to that of Satan's in the binging of the show: they have been contaminated. All of a sudden, God is back. Eve falls abruptly, Adam picks her up and they point towards God in their attempt to delegate the blame, then both fall violently. During the fall, when Eve can only see darkness she repeats: “Father, where are you? Father, I can't see ... I can't breath**e** ... Father ...”. A frantic circular dance follows, as they try to recover from the fall and to stand up, but can't do so, as if held by an invisible force. They resemble Satan and his fall from part one, who is now watching from behind the curtain. Eve points at him in the fading light with the last ounce of her strength.

The spot light comes. Possessed by the devil the dancers writhe in a licentious ritualistic dance. All three dancers at the same time, but within their own space and different direction, perform frantic and highly controlled, fast and expansive movements of the same sequence. Eve, Adam, and Satan are alike. They are now fully human: angry and carnal at once. They fall exhausted. There is now a second spot light on stage beaming from the side on a lower level than God, which represents the Son**;** Satan rolls off to the edge of the stage. Adam and Eve now touch for the first time in the dance. Slow motion push and shove reflect their reconciliation attempts. Eventually Eve chooses Adam over Satan who is still lurking behind the curtain. As the scene unfolds we realise Eve is the main character here. Only she actively tries to work things out, to figure what to do next, while Adam just stands there resigned and lets her *perform* her love towards him and her admission of guilt. This seems to be very exhausting as the phrase is performed at numerous levels. She tries to rise up with difficulty, eventually stays curled up on the floor.

There is a long period of total darkness after which we see all three of the characters in ghastly convulsions on the floor. Eve is the first to stand up, but they all keep falling and rolling

violently. This is worse than (the scene of) Hell, truly a lost Paradise. Adam and Eve clash. Darkness ensues with dreadful piercing loud music. We hear sounds of struggle, and when the music subsides Eve cries. A very short scene follows in which Satan stands up in a bright light. He has succeeded. However, he does not seem to be relishing his glory – he is still a bit slumped and the moment is very brief.

In the opening of the third and last part – the Expulsion chapter, which ultimately deals with the acceptance of the human condition – we see *the* ultimate fall of humanity and the subsequent expulsion from paradise (which was not much of a paradise anyway). Eve is slouched, almost curled up, with her back towards the audience. She is shy, hiding her nudity. Adam and Satan initially perform similar movement phrases although in different direction until seamlessly Satan moves Adam holding him by the neck. The moment we notice that is truly uncomfortable, we as the audience are almost embarrassed for Adam being such a weakling. He has lost his masculinity and is now played by Satan like a puppet. Eve joins them and the three engage in a frenzied delirious dance all over the stage, while the spotlight traverses the space. As they throw themselves on the floor we can really feel the suffering. Satan leaves, Adam and Eve fall to the floor for the last time and remain there as the light dims.

As the stage lights up again, the couple are still lying on the floor, slowly trying to raise. Adam shouts at God, then he laments resigned. For this scene Calixto asked his dancer to study a fragment from the Book of Job, from the Old Testament. In the part that was used for *Paradise Lost*, Job shouts vociferously against God, wounded, not understanding the ire and contempt of God turned towards a man who has done nothing wrong. Calixto explained during the interview: “I chose this specific book because it deals with the condemnation of an innocent man as a trial of his endurance, faith and obedience. It is plain cruel.” What follows will turn out to be Eve's assertiveness and encouragement against the cruelty of God. The dancers are still on the floor with their backs towards us. There is a side low spot light, and Eve crawls towards it. It is warm. She stumbles and looks scared, almost crying, an indistinct voice in the ether. Adam follows her; they seem to struggle. She is pushed away violently by an invisible force when she screams at the source of light and falls into Adam's arms, then they both fall on the floor. God came down to bestow his punishment but Eve has the courage to stands up against him.

In the final scene Adam is tending to Eve. They touch tenderly and slowly stand up. The ambience is warm and soothing, as the God and his paradise are finally gone. Touch is central to this scene as it has been reserved for real, mature, truly humane love, which could have not been realised prior to the fall. Piano is plunking with hope. Eve starts moving on, while holding Adam by his shoulder, but almost by his neck. Once again, he is being led. Torn whether he should follow

her, he stretches pointing up, towards where God used to be, but Eve unrelentingly pulls him to the side. Her body language tells she has given up on God, his paradise, punishment, and if necessary Adam too: she lets go of him, and turns towards the direction she was just encouraging Adam to follow her. Drooped in resignation and disappointment that he does not want to follow despite her love, she starts to proceed on her own. Adam looks back and realises there is no return, no more God to turn to, and he follows Eve instead into the *real* life. She is his new leader, after God, and Satan, and – it is implied – will be the one to look up to, almost a new God. In the performance and in the original poem to an extent, as we have seen in the previous chapters, Adam always needs to be led. All his actions are a result of someone else's orders or plotting, and his lack of independent thinking – which Calixto puts down to religion mostly, but also to the all-pervasive and deeply ingrained social constructs – ultimately lead him to a disaster. This is a disaster from which the risk-taking Eve rescues him. Thanks to her perseverance and assertiveness against God, she – stripping the show of all dogma in one moment – manages to see the infinite possibilities unfurling in front of humanity, and makes the decision (again) to embrace them. Their movements slowly synchronise**;** this time she is ahead of him, with their back towards us they are leaving. *This* is the most delightful and dazzling moment in their lives, and a truly magnificent spectacle for us: with brilliantly golden light dappled across the surface in glimmering patterns, irradiating the space with shimmering phantasms. Soothing music with melodious gentle timbre, gives a feeling of tenderness and hope. Their harmonious slow sensual duet, with swinging flowing movements, expresses intimacy, relief and a newly found trust in togetherness. They look at each other, now he touches her with love, almost rests on her shoulder. They have reconciled. Physical contact between the dancers has been reserved for special moments to accentuate their importance. Here, it is the mature love of two humans who are experiencing it for the first time. Before the fall, before the 'contamination' with everything humane that life carries – anger, lust, pride, wantonness, shame – pure love could not have been realised. Adam and Eve's pure love was too pure to be real, to be deep enough to hold them together. It is only now that they are fully developed human beings, and it is good. Lights fade out, music continues with just a few notes dispersed in the dark vastness.

There is an epilogue present in the video, and originally in the program notes, but not displayed after the show in a theatre, which quotes from William Blake's *The Marriage of heaven and Hell* (1793):

> If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is. Infinite.
>
> For man has closed himself up,
>
> till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

This work, mainly written in prose, presents a unified version of the world in which desire and

materiality are vital elements, ergo the title. Samir Calixto when asked about this addition explained that the epilogue was added to give some food for thought for later – something to take home with, but also to provide more understanding into his creative process, for those who are interested in exploring the subject and the work further: “I have been studying many philosophers from various traditions and places in the world for this work, and for *M*[17], I realised they all tell us one thing: that we are asleep, that we need to wake up! And religion is the first veil to examine and do away with”. Blake's quote, as well as Calixto's approach which it succinctly illustrates, manifest most prominently in the performance during the expulsion scene – or perhaps departure is a more accurate word, for – as we already established – it is Eve who decides to go, regardless of God's command, and Adam who follows. Now that they possess knowledge, are fully human – with wrath and love, and they have crack-opened their protective shell, there is the vastness of the universe unfolding in front of them in all its endless luminescent beauty.

## 5.3: Conclusion

*Paradise Lost* is an epic that deals with complex philosophical, ethical and social matters on many levels: from Milton's moralizing attitudes (he after all can justify God's ways to the people), to intimate spirituality, to political liberties (or lack thereof) in the vast areas from gender roles to kingship. As such, it is impossible to analyse all its aspects in one go. Instead, it provides us with sources for contemplation and personal pursuit of further development. Samir Calixto was inspired by the constant fight of oppositions: good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, heaven and hell, and of course light and darkness, all of which are so vividly depicted in the poem. This theme was a departure point for Calixto in his creation. The concept of light is given personality and is explored in manifold directions: “How much does light attract and how much does it repel? Is a lit space without bodies necessarily an empty space?” are just a few of them (Calixto). Just as complex as the poem, the dance performance is also impossible to analyse in one go. My attempt was to find a common feature, an underlying thread connecting both works, and see how that feature is approached and explored, how it connects and how it differs, considering the historical

17 Samir Calixto's subsequent creation was a highly acclaimed philosophical dance performance, entitled *M,* which builds on several themes touched upon in *Paradise Lost.* The program folder, also available on Korzo's website, reads:

> For his new performance *M* he sought inspiration in the philosophical insights of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Nietzsche set great store by the knowledge contained in the human body: “there is more wisdom in the body that in the deepest philosophy”. In *M*, Samir focuses on the power of transformation that the body possesses. Accompanied by a modern arrangement of music by Mahler, five male dances present their entire humanity on stage: their physical and mental effort and dedication, their extreme force and vulnerability, and their personal fortunes and paradoxes.
>
> <http://www.korzo.nl/en/productions/m-samir-calixto>

developments in relevant disciplines of scholarship. For this task, I chose to examine the performance of gender roles, and specifically masculinity. In order to be able to draw sensible conclusions based on two distinct works, which not only use different medium to communicate but are also centuries apart, an introduction to the essentials of a relationship between dance and literature had to be made. This, with the concept of intermediality being of the most importance to us here, has been followed by a brief study on adaptation, in which fidelity and various communication modes were explored in order to illustrate the processes in which certain aspects of a work inevitably get lost in translation between different media, while other aspects become apparent. This also applies to the analysis attempts in this thesis – as Martha Graham once famously said: “The body says what words cannot.”

I have looked at how gender is performed both in social contexts as well as mediated by art in dance and literature. There have been multiple interpretations of gender roles in *Paradise Lost* and I chose to follow and explore the one that Samir Calixto chose to pursue: that what is supposed to be a trait of a specific gender in our collective consciousness is only a manifestation of that deeply ingrained collectively constructed consciousness, and not an inherent quality that predisposes or precludes individuals to or from anything. I have proposed that Eve is the ideal embodiments of masculinity – not that masculinity which tells men to be aggressive and women to be coy, but the masculinity of which Milton writes in his prose: a set of moral values which make a person a fully developed, independently thinking, self-managing human being. I have acknowledged how unfortunate it is that virtuosity is attributed to maleness even in this liberated form, but I have also noted that since that's how the way the world works, there is no point spending time lamenting upon the matters of fact, especially when that time can be used more constructively in bringing up the beneficial aspects of such approach. One is that Eve by acquiring the masculine traits of inquisitiveness, assertiveness, and eventually leadership, has not lost her femininity, nor has she been deprived of it by the scrutinizing male eye. Rishona Zimring in her study on the influence of dance in literary modernism says that:

> the figure of the female dancer (is seen) as not only a symbol, but as an agent of aesthetic transformation in the twentieth century. (She) embodies the quest for freedom. She represents a revolt against the confinements of domesticity, she invents, she breaks taboos, she is mad, she is criminal, society will not tolerate her, she is subversive. (707)

We have seen – in the Gemeente Museum incident – how much commotion a female body can cause in the conservative social circles of art production, which are still possibly the most relaxed social circles I can think of when it comes to this level of affluence. Gender trouble is still with us and very much alive nearly thirty years after Butler's crusade. The battle for equality has become more placid over the years, and is being expressed subtly in fine works of art such Calixto's

*Paradise Lost*, where he gives Eve as much importance and agency – if not more than, or perhaps just near equal to – God. I will leave the reader to judge these fine shades of interpretation to himself, and instead focus more, and along with Calixto, on how our judgement, assumptions, motives and reactions are informed by the rigid structures that operate *outside* of our personal consciousness – possibly the most important lesson I have learned throughout the course of research for this thesis. The choreographer promptly notes that "our never-ending subjection to invisible forces (be they spiritual or scientific), and the timeless relation between myth and contemporary reality are in constant competition with the endless human search for illumination".

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