

Preface: The mental repercussions we have suffered from this course are still not completely gone, so please bear with us when reading this text...

Presuming to justify the ways of God to men was certainly no mean feat for a writer in seventeenth-century England. When John Milton set out to do just this in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, he did not know that the most critical appraisal of his work would come from a group of nine students, who ventured to tackle said poem more than 300 years later.

This undertaking was initiated and supervised by The Lecturer Formerly Known as Ralf Haekel, who will henceforth be referred to as Sir Walter due to his highly entertaining and most convincing performance as Sir Walter Scott during our Ghost Walk – which ended in him being tortured and executed in public.

An essential part of the coursework was comprised of numerous heated discussions, which were often turned into fiery debates where two parties fought each other in lethal word battles. Those could seldom be refined to the classroom, however, which is why *Paradise Lost* emerged as a ubiquitous subject of debate. All too frequently, it infiltrated even the pub talk during the evenings; other lecturers often joined in so as to throw in their two pennies worth on the matter. “It’s all about love,” was one of Mr Rudolf’s contributions to the topic, a thesis we included in the debate when it came to the central theme of the epic poem. Sir Walter, on the other hand, did not at all agree with him there: This nearly resulted in an end of their bromance... Luckily, disaster could be averted!

As for the matters most controversially discussed, issues at stake were, for instance, the “free choice versus predestination dilemma” or whether Satan was the personification of evil and how he could have had a *choice* when God created him the way he was. God himself was naturally another delicate subject since he was rather boring and farouche when compared to the intriguing, fascinating character of Satan, who was everybody’s darling, especially Milton’s.

Something else kept reoccurring during the course and simply could not be repressed: AMBIGUITY. Once unleashed, there was no escaping the curse it had cast over us! Ambiguity became the non-word of the course and has since been used more excessively than the word

"love" in Beatles songs. Sir Walter as well as his pawns were often subject to ambiguous poetic deadlocks, and may, at times, even have been *lost* in *Paradise Lost*.

To put it in a nutshell, this course has left an irretrievable imprint on us - something we shall perhaps never fully recover from. Nonetheless, we would not want to have missed it for the world! Thank you so much, Sir Walter, for this unforgettable experience! And remind us to get you a boxing bell so that you can make yourself heard during the contentious debates next time (should things get a little out of hand again).

P.S.: This text was written under the divine influence of heavenly muse Urania. For further information, please confer the epic poem itself.

Written by Laura, Tiana and Sandra